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ABSTRACT

The past and current condition of general education in the two-year college is examined in this four-part monograph. Part 1 reviews the history of general education, tracing its roots in the European tradition of liberal education from Greco-Roman antiquity to the end of the 19th century in America. In addition, the 20th century general education movement and the contemporary debate over general education are discussed. Part 2 focuses on overall trends in general education with respect to requirements, structure, content, and components, and points to signs of the current decline and disarray of the field. Part 3 first scrutinizes emerging integrative, interdisciplinary/distribution, and competency-based models of general education. It then examines trends evident in the programs of a sample of community colleges that have recently introduced curriculum reforms and points to the accomplishments of these reforms in revitalizing general education. Looking at the choices facing two-year colleges in determining the future of general education, part 4 sets forth a rationale for general education and examines those forces militating against curriculum reform (e.g., faculty opposition and traditional organizational structures), as well as those providing an impetus for reform (e.g., the increasing visibility of general education and concern for quality). Finally, the monograph offers five recommendations for revitalizing general education in the community college. (AYC)

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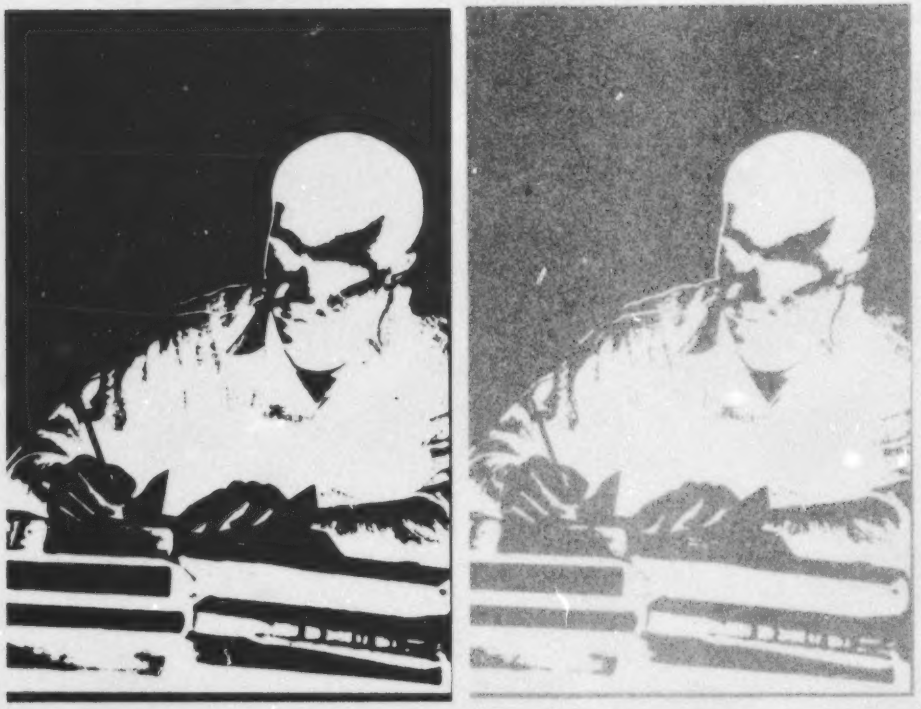

At The Crossroads: General Education in Community Colleges

By Clifton F. Conrad

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At The Crossroads: General Education in Community Colleges

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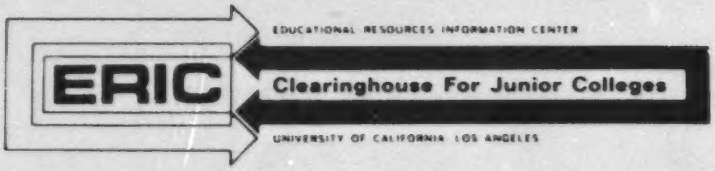

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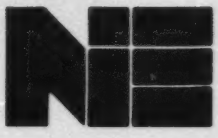

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

During the 1970s the condition of general education in the nation's colleges and universities was nationally debated. The debate extended into two-year colleges, although it was less publicized than in the four-year institutions.* Aside from a few visible reforms, however, such as the new general education at Miami-Dade Community College (Lukenbill and McCabe, 1978), little is known about the overall condition of general education in community colleges. What are the major trends in general education in two-year colleges? Have community colleges reexamined general education, and if so, what if any changes and innovations have been introduced? What do recent developments portend for the future of common learning in two-year colleges? The few articles, book chapters, and fugitive documents written on the subject do not adequately delineate critical issues or systematically examine recent developments. In fact, considerable confusion exists over the status of general education in community colleges (Hammons, Thomas, and Ward, 1980).

This monograph reviews the past and examines the current condition of general education in the two-year college. Part 1 reviews the history of general education and anchors general education in the European tradition of liberal education. It examines the history of liberal education from Greco-Roman antiquity to the end of the nineteenth century in America, traces the history of the general education movement in the twentieth century, and briefly examines the contemporary debate over general education. Parts 2 and 3 examine current trends and developments in general education. Part 2 focuses on overall trends in general education in two-year colleges, while Part 3 scrutinizes emerging models and trends in a small sample of community colleges that have recently introduced reforms in general education.

In Part 4 the choices facing two-year colleges regarding the present and future of general education are metaphorically compared. On the one hand, colleges may choose a well-worn path traversed by the majority of institutions in recent years, whose signposts include reducing the amount of work required, loosening

*The terms community college, two-year college, junior college, and open-door college are used interchangeably throughout the paper.

requirements, relying more on discipline-based than on integrative or interdisciplinary courses; in short, abandoning the common learning for all practical purposes. On the other hand, two-year colleges may choose the course plotted by a small number of institutions that seek to reaffirm the value and meaning of general education by designing programs to effect integrated, shared learning as a common experience for every student. Finally, the merging indicators in the essay return an image of a time propitious for many community colleges to reexamine and revitalize their programs, indeed to consider the road "less traveled." In this regard, the final chapter provides a rationale for that choice, outlines the challenge faced in reexamination and reform, and sketches an agenda for stimulating discussion of the future of general education in community colleges.

Notwithstanding the differences over the meaning of general education, this monograph requires a working definition of the term. We take general education to be education aimed at the cultivation and refinement of intellect, the acquisition of knowledge and culture, and the development of the whole person. For two reasons, general education is viewed here as synonymous with liberal education. First, the two terms have come to be used interchangeably in both common and scholarly discourse with the practical result that any attempt to distinguish between the concepts is likely to create semantic confusion. Second, and more important, because general education can be viewed as a twentieth-century attempt to adapt the dynamic idea of liberal education to the needs of our time and place, such a liking of the two concepts emphasizes the connection between the historical tradition of liberal education and its twentieth-century counterpart. Throughout the remainder of this paper, the term general education will be used except in those instances where the older concept of liberal education is more appropriate.

1. GENERAL EDUCATION IN TRANSITION

Despite its status in the educational lexicon, general education is an ambiguous concept in both theory and practice. Current usage of the concept, as well as of its numerous synonyms and related terms, mirrors a state of confusion over the ends and means of postsecondary education.

It is pointless, even counterproductive, to distinguish sharply between general education and liberal education. Such a distinction separates general education from its roots in the tradition of liberal education, narrows the grounds of discourse and, in the process, fails to consider how a historical understanding of liberal education can help reduce the current confusion over the ends and means of general education. This essay begins by recognizing that general education is a stepchild to the tradition of liberal education.

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

Liberal education, as both normative ideal and curricular practice, has changed considerably through the history of Western civilization. Yet to a degree unknown in other forms of education, liberal education has been anchored in a cultural idea first articulated by the Greeks in the fifth century B.C. This brief account examines the Greek ideal of liberal education, describes how the liberal arts curriculum was determined and limited by the Romans and made consonant with religious aims, shows how that curriculum was later expanded during the medieval period and the Renaissance, and traces the development of liberal education in America from the Colonial period through the nineteenth century.

The classical idea of a liberal education was captured by the Greeks in two key concepts: *paideia* and *arete*. *Paideia* referred to education or, more broadly, culture; in practice it was clearly linked to *arete*, the ability to live one's life well—to be more fully human (Drew, 1978, p. 304). A central question persistently posed by the Greeks was: What type of *paideia* leads to *arete*? In the process of seeking *arete*, the Greeks created a culture that became an educative force in itself. Liberal education, in turn, was grounded in the idea that education is culture and not simply the transmission of, or knowledge about, culture.

For the Greeks, education for *arete* was fundamentally a moral activity—not moral in a narrow religious context but in the sense that ultimately the very life and health of each individual and of society as a whole were at stake. Within such a context, the Socratic maxim "know thyself" was fundamentally a personal and moral inquiry, but not a private one. This blending of personal excellence with the public good was embodied in *arete*.

In short, liberal education was viewed by the Greeks primarily as a moral enterprise that emphasized common humanity as a means to create both personal and public excellence. It provided an ideal for education that was flexible enough to adjust to changing times and circumstances, but concrete enough to remain potent and tenacious for 2,500 years (Conrad and Wyer, 1980, pp. 6-8).

In Greek antiquity, the ideal of liberal education was maintained in the *enkuklios paideia*, meaning "general education, prior to professional studies," which consisted of instruction in the basic literacy skills, both quantitative and verbal. There was, however, a plurality of approaches to liberal education in ancient Greece, and the formulation of a single, widely accepted program of liberal education is best attributed to the Romans (Kimball, 1981).

Several Roman scholars, seeking to establish a system of education based on Greek ideals, shaped liberal education by giving it more concrete meaning in actual practice. In the first century B.C., the Roman scholar Varro wrote the first encyclopedic work on the liberal arts. Varro's treatise, which is one of the earliest known usages of "liberal" in conjunction with education, identified nine liberal arts as central to a liberal education (Boyd, 1966, p. 69).

Various combinations of *artes liberales* were suggested in the ensuing Christian era, and a consensus regarding the major components of a liberal education did not seem to develop until the fourth century A.D. (Kimball, 1981, p. 23). In that century, Martianus Capella wrote a popular work which identified seven liberal arts and laid the foundation for the medieval curriculum. These seven liberal arts were divided into the trivium and the quadrivium, the former include three subjects concerned with written and spoken language (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and the latter including four mathematical or "scientific" subjects (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music). These seven subjects did not comprise the entire range of cultural subjects known to Greece and Rome; rather, they represented the selective delimitation and organization of knowledge taken from the Greek heritage (Butts, 1939, p. 25).

The liberal arts curriculum took root because the church desired its clergymen and teachers to be educated in the studies inherited from Greco-Roman culture. But it was the clergyman Cassiodorus who, in the sixth century, provided important scriptural sanction for the seven liberal arts as preparation for the study of theology (Abelson, 1906, p. 9). By the end of the sixth century, the subjects of the medieval liberal arts curriculum were fixed at seven, and secular learning outside the domain of theology and scripture was kept alive (Conrad and Wyer, 1980, p. 5). Throughout the Middle Ages, the curriculum of the seven liberal arts was considered the basic program of studies and was required for those individuals seeking a degree in arts of a license to teach (Schachner, 1962, pp. 13-14).

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the major medieval universities—Paris, Bologna, Oxford—were established, along with at least 80 others (Haskins, 1957 p. 20). The liberal arts curriculum, based on the trivium and quadrivium, provided the foundation for study in the professions of law, theology, and medicine. Gradually, the baccalaureate degree was used to denote proficiency in the medieval curriculum of the seven liberal arts.

With the rise of the universities, the liberal arts were transformed into a dynamic cultural ideal thriving in a new setting and, more generally, flourishing in an age of discovery and rebirth—the Renaissance (Conrad and Wyer, 1980, p. 6). In this period of rebirth, a renaissance of classical knowledge and values, the medieval curriculum was modified and expanded to accommodate the "new" learning. The major effect of the Renaissance on the medieval curriculum was the emphasis placed on the newly rediscovered classical languages and literature at the expense of the medieval and religious, language and literature. Aristotle was reconciled with church doctrine by Thomas Aquinas, and thus Greek philosophical and scientific studies were added to the traditional seven liberal arts (Butts, 1939, pp. 28-37). By the end of the medieval period in about 1500, the arts course consisted of the seven medieval liberal arts, the works of Aristotle, and studies of the languages and literature of ancient Greece and Rome.

When the nine colonial colleges were established in America, their curricula were influenced directly by Oxford and Cambridge and were rooted in the "liberal arts" as they had come down from Greek and Roman antiquity (Conrad, 1978b, p. 48). As Rudolph (1962) has observed, even frontier hardships could not prevail against the age-old belief that true education was liberal and general, not narrowly vocational.

Curricular offerings were similar in all the colonial colleges, with the ancient languages and literature as the centerpiece of the classical curriculum. While the trivium and quadrivium, as well as the emphasis on Greek and Latin, were rarely tampered with at most colleges until the nineteenth century, the liberal arts gradually were expanded to include such subjects as natural science, history, moral philosophy, English language and literature, and modern foreign languages (Brubacher and Rudy, 1976, p. 14; Rudolph, 1977, pp. 31-39). Despite these additions, however, the classical curriculum held firm throughout the colonial period and deviations from that program of studies were infrequent.

Nevertheless, by the end of the eighteenth century a few individuals had introduced reforms intended to combat the limited and "impractical" character of the classical program of studies. In the newly established College of Philadelphia, for example, Benjamin Franklin and William Smith modified and enlarged the classical curriculum. Latin and Greek were discontinued after the first year of study; subjects such as history, politics, trade and commerce, physics, and zoology were added under the umbrella of moral and natural philosophy; and rhetoric and literary criticism were emphasized (Conrad and Wyer, 1980, p. 10).

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, progressive forces were determined to make education more practical and scientific (Hofstadter and Smith, 1961, p. 148). Thomas Jefferson at Virginia, George Ticknor at Harvard, and James Marsh at Vermont were among those who attempted to stretch the liberal arts to include the study of modern languages and more mathematics, English, and natural science. Other reformers, such as Philip Lindsley at Nashville, Jacob Abbot at Amherst, and President Nott at Union, were vigorous proponents of a "parallel" course of study that would provide an alternative to the classical curriculum.

Although many of the proposals for reform would eventually be adopted throughout higher education, most of them were forestalled by the Yale Report of 1828. The Yale Report was more than a local proclamation issued by President Jeremiah Day and Professor James Kingsley; it was the first unified American statement concerning the nature of liberal education. In essence, the Report was an eloquent reaffirmation of the medieval liberal arts curriculum. The purpose of a college education was to provide the "discipline" (memory, habits of thought) and "furniture" (factual knowledge) of the mind. Above all, students were expected to develop "mental power which would be transferred at will from one study to another and from studies in general to the occupations of

life" (Brubacher and Rudy, 1976, p. 289). This mental discipline was equated with self-denial, strength of character, and even moral righteousness itself (Conrad and Wyer, 1980, p. 12).

Embedded in the Yale Report was a view of liberal education that illuminated the connection between the Greek ideal of the fourth and fifth centuries B.C. and the early nineteenth-century liberal arts college. That was the idea of the development of the whole man:

> The great object of a collegiate education . . . is to give that expansion and balance of the mental powers, those liberal and comprehensive views, and those fine proportions of characters, which are not found in him whose ideas are always confined to one particular channel (Hofstadter and Smith, 1961, p. 282).

The Yale Report was an influential document, serving as an ideological barrier against forces pressing for major curricular reform. But the nation was becoming more democratic, industrial, urban, and practical (Blackman, 1969, P. 523). Changes were demanded in the classical curriculum, and in many older as well as newly-established colleges the so-called modern subjects, from English and history to the emerging sciences, were gradually incorporated into the curricula during the ante-bellum period.

The Morrill Act (Land Grant Act) of 1862 cut away still more at the classical liberal arts curriculum and hastened movement toward widespread curricular reform. The Morrill Act provided money through the sale of federal lands to establish state institutions of higher education in which argiculture, engineering, and related subjects would comprise a major part of the curriculum. Professional, pre-professional, and practical subjects registered a permanent victory.

If the Morrill Act undercut the significance of liberal education in favor of the "practical arts," the growing influence of the German universities, especially their emphasis on specialization and modern subjects, further jeopardized the future of liberal studies (Conrad, 1978b, p. 50). Many Americans studied in Germany during the latter part of the nineteenth century, returning home with a view of higher education as a place for specialized, rather than general, education. Academic departments were organized primarily around "modern" subjects such as government and English), and in-depth courses became a central feature of the undergraduate curriculum. Although the German model of higher education was never fully im-

plemented in this country, German values were transplanted to America and specialization was enhanced at the expense of liberal education.

The liberal arts were further challenged by the growth of the elective system in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century. Students were given a wide choice in their selection of courses and this freedom led to increased specialization at the undergraduate level. Moreover, the elective system contributed substantially to the development of the modern disciplines and the tendency to view all subject matter as equally important. The growth of the elective system and the concomitant emphasis on specialization seriously weakened liberal education as a tool, integrated experience.

By the turn of the century, the Morrill Act, the influence of the German universities, and the elective system combined to undermine the classical liberal arts curriculum. The classical conception of liberal education continued to survive in some liberal arts colleges in the twentieth century. In the vast majority of colleges and universities, however, it was a different story. Liberal education, rooted in Greco-Roman antiquity and the seven liberal arts, stretched during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to accommodate the needs of an expanding nation, and could seemingly bend no more without destroying itself. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the undergraduate liberal arts curriculum was in disarray (Rudolph, 1977).

While the practice of liberal education had been seriously corroded, the idea of liberal education persisted. Supporters of liberal education were increasingly identified more in terms of their general point of view toward education—what Laurence Veysey (1965) called "liberal culture"—rather than by their commitment to a particular course of studies. In the twentieth century, a series of reforms, known collectively as the "general education movement," were introduced to reinstate and reinvigorate the tradition of liberal education.

GENERAL EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The first major attempt to restore the common learning was initiated by Abbott Lawrence Lowell, who assume the presidency of Harvard in 1909. With the support of the Harvard faculty, Lowell established a general education component that was required of all undergraduates during the first two years of college. In brief, the

program was based on a "distribution" system in which students were required to choose courses in three major divisions of knowledge: humanities, social sciences, natural sciences. The distribution pattern of general education was adopted at most colleges and universities in the following decades, but it did not satisfy most advocates of "liberal culture." According to Earl McGrath:

> The distribution system . . . failed to instill the breadth of learning its advocates intended. Each student's program of studies came to have little resemblance to that of his classmates, and particularly to the required curriculum in the colleges of 1850, to say nothing of the original seven liberal arts of the early days at the University of Paris (1976, pp. 22-23).

A more intensive and concerted effort to review the idea of liberal education led to reforms in general education which were aimed at restoring integrity and breadth of learning to the undergraduate curriculum. These reforms were implemented at a few institutions during World War I and spread throughout higher education in the next two decades. After a period of relative calm in the late 1930s and early 1940s, a revival of interest occurred in the decade immediately following World War II.

General education courses of an experimental nature were the first step in cirricular reform. In 1914, President Alexander Meiklejohn of Amherst introduced the first interdisciplinary survey course, a course for freshmen called "Social and Economic Institutions." After the war, comprehensive survey courses such as the one at Amherst took on the character of a movement. Probably the most influential of the new survey courses was "Contemporary Civilization," introduced at Columbia University in 1919. This social science course cut across departmental lines and emphasized current social, economic, and political problems and their historical background. Required of all freshmen, the course was described in the 1919 Columbia catalog in sweeping, ambitious terms:

> The aim of the course is to inform the student of the more outstanding and influential factors of his physical and social environment. The chief features of the intellectual, economic, and political life of today are treated and considered with their dependence on and their difference from the past.

> The great events of the last century in the history of the countries now more closely linked in international relations are reviewed, and the insistent problems, internal and international, which they now are facing are given detailed consideration. By thus giving the student, early in his college course, objective material on which to base his own judgment, it is thought he will be aided in an intelligent participation in the civilization of his own day (cited in Boyer and Levine, 1981, pp. 9-10).

Other colleges soon followed suit and offered their own survey courses. The Humanities course at Reed College (1921) and "The Nature of the World and Man" at the University of Chicago (1924) were, along with "Contemporary Civilization" at Columbia, models which influenced the development of new courses at other institutions (Thomas, 1962, p. 69). Interdisciplinary courses began to appear at many institutions: Dartmouth, Indiana, Princeton, Stanford, Missouri, Northwestern, Williams, and Wisconsin (Rudolph, 1977, p. 238). By the end of the 1920s, experiments with various types of general education courses were commonplace throughout higher education.

While nearly all of these interdisciplinary courses were designed to reduce excessive specialization and departmentalization by providing a survey of related fields, there was great variation in terms of content, structure, and method of instruction. For example, some of the courses were organized around cultural epochs in history, while others centered on major problems of contemporary society. Some courses were required, others elective; some could be taken at any point in a student's program, others could be taken only in sequence; and some were planned for nonspecialists only, others for both the specialist and nonspecialist.

Important as these diverse efforts were to the revitalization of the common learning, they were met with two major criticisms. First, such survey courses placed major emphasis on breadth of information, and they frequently came under heavy fire for their superficiality. To be sure, the defining of new principles to guide the organization of knowledge was no easy task, and the growth of specialization and departmental organization militated against the development of interdisciplinary courses. Attempts to determine specific content to form the basis for a broad intellectual experience were often less than successful, and they proceeded slowly and painfully (Thomas, 1962, pp. 87-88).

A second criticism concerned the piecemeal character of many efforts to revive general education. Most of the first experiments to design interdisciplinary courses were planned by small groups of faculty who had no comprehensive scheme of curriculum reform. Planned independently of the entire curriculum, a few isolated courses could not contribute much to the development of an integrated program of liberal studies.

In response to these and other criticisms, a number of colleges in the 1920s began to search for integrating principles that would insure both breadth and coherence in the undergraduate program of studies. The most revolutionary changes took place at Reed College and at the University of Chicago. In both instances, reorganization of the faculty accompanied major curriculum change.

The changes at Reed began in 1921 under the leadership of President Scholtz. In a thorough revamping of the undergraduate program that was designed to lay the foundation of a truly liberal education, Reed first adopted a program of two years of broad humanities courses with small discussion sections. In 1924, the curriculum for the first two years was organized around two courses of study: literature and social science, and mathematics and natural science. This curriculum revision was accompanied by a major administrative change, as the conventional departmental organization of the faculty was replaced by a divisional structure. Within a few years, Reed had established one of the most innovative and comprehensive approaches to general education in the nation.

At the University of Chicago, a much more complex institution than the small but distinguished Reed College, preliminary efforts at reorganization and curricular reform in the 1920s led to a major reorganization of the University in 1930-1931. Five new divisions were established including the college (the lower division) which assumed responsibility for general education. The college was given a separate budget and a new dean who was empowered to make appointments to the faculty. Over time, the administrative reorganization led to the establishment of a separate lower division faculty that gave all or most of its time to the general education program. (The policy of giving much of the first two years of college over to general education became the norm in most junior colleges.) Thus, the major reorganization at Chicago went beyond what happened at Reed: not only had a departmental structure been replaced by divisions, but the faculty was divided into an upper and a lower division with the latter concerned exclusively with general education.

In addition to establishing a separate college division, the University of Chicago adopted one of the most radical programs of general education in the country. The program, which underwent numerous modifications in the several years of its development, consisted of a series of integrated, year-long courses in the major fields of knowledge. The program's most significant features included provision for early college admission and a program requirement that each student pass seven comprehensive examinations, five of which were required of every student and could be taken whenever the student was prepared to take them. (For a detailed history of the development of the Chicago general education program, see Bell, 1968; McGrath, 1976.)

While the changes at Reed and Chicago did not represent models of administrative and curricular organization that could easily be applied to other institutions, they undoubtedly had considerable influence on the thought and practices of many institutions (Thomas, 1962, p. 87). In the late 1920s and early 1930s, a number of other unorthodox general education programs were introduced. Influenced by the work of John Dewey, several new colleges emphasizing "life adjustment" education were opened. The General College at the University of Minnesota, Sarah Lawrence, Black Mountain, and Stephens College (then a two-year college) included highly individualized programs based on student needs. During the same period, new general education units were organized within existing universities: the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin, the Basic College of Michigan State University, University College of the University of Florida, and the General College of Boston University. Between 1920 and 1940 over 30 colleges established full-scale programs of general education (Rudolph, 1977, p. 256).

At the same time that a few bold, innovative general education programs were introduced, reforms were occurring much more gradually and incrementally in most institutions. In many colleges, a new interdisciplinary course was introduced, modified, and sometimes expanded or occasionally dropped; a few years later, another course was introduced; and so on until a "program" of general education gradually came into existence. At Columbia, for example, the original Contemporary Civilization course (1919) was expanded into a two-year sequence in 1929; a two-year introductory science sequence as an alternative to optional science courses was started in 1934 but discontinued in 1941; and a one-year Humanities course introduced in 1937 became a two-year sequence ten years later.

Aside from the introduction of a few interdisciplinary survey courses (such as Western Civilization at Stanford in 1939), the depression and war years saw an ebbing of interest in general education (Boyer and Levine, 1981, pp. 12-13), an interest which revived, however, in the late 1940s. The precipitant of this rekindled interest was a volume, informally referred to as "the Redbook," which was produced by a Harvard faculty committee in 1945. The Redbook was a vital reaffirmation of the utility and force of the ancient ideal of liberal education. The Harvard Committee called for a core curriculum that, with only two major exceptions, was implemented there in 1949 (McGrath, 1976, p. 39). A number of colleges adopted variations of the Harvard plan, and many others introduced similar curricular changes (Klein, 1980). General education reform gained widespread support, and approximately one-half of the nation's colleges were brought into its sphere of influence by the mid-fifties. Although there was considerable diversity in the new programs, several themes were common to many: (1) an emphasis on the broad outlines of human knowledge, usually realized through survey courses; (2) a core curriculum; (3) an emphasis on the cultivation of students' ability to think critically; and (4) an effort to influence students' values and behavior (McGrath, 1976: 23-24).

This revival of activity in general education proved to be relatively short-lived. While highly publicized general education programs reshaped the course of undergraduate study in the 1940s and 1950s, less publicized erosion took place across the next two decades (Rudolph, 1977, p. 253). Integrated courses were replaced by discipline-based courses, and core requirements were replaced by elective courses and a "smorgasbord" approach to distribution requirements.

By the early 1970s, there had been nearly a century of repeated attempts to reinvigorate liberal learning had passed. But how successful were they? On the one hand, at least some coherence was brought to the undergraduate curriculum: the excesses of the elective system were curbed by the development of a general education component of the curriculum in most colleges, and widespread adoption of distribution requirements occurred. On the other hand, the evidence was persuasive that most attempts had failed to recapture the shared learning and common curricular experience that had once been quintessential to a "liberally educated" person. As Frederick Rudolph succintly stated it:

> In the twentieth century (the liberal arts) curriculum lingered only as an anachronism. In many places the purposes had fled with the curriculum. Distribution, liberal culture, and general education all were characterized by an embarrassing lack of authority and an absence of agreement on the knowledge that should define an educated person (1977, p. 243).

The failure to revitalize liberal education occurred in all types of institutions, not least of which was the emerging junior college. During the first sixty years of this century the number of junior colleges increased steadily from only a handful to nearly 700 institutions (Fields, 1962, p. 47). Their curricula reflected a diversity of institutional purposes, but the general education function was central to their perceived primary purpose, offering two years of standard college work (Brick, 1963). Indeed, a study of the curriculum in 58 public and private junior colleges in 1921 and 1922 found that liberal arts courses accounted for three-fourths of the total offerings (Koos, 1924). Even with the rapid growth of occupational education between and after the two world wars, followed by the emergence of community and compensatory education, general education continued to be viewed as the backbone of the curriculum in most two-year colleges.

From the turn of the century through the 1960s the junior colleges looked to the four-year colleges and universities for a solution to the "problem" of general education. Following the lead of the four-year institutions, survey courses were gradually adopted in many two-year institutions, and most junior colleges introduced a form of "distribution" general education requirements. Yet junior colleges introduced only the more conservative innovations which were taking place in the four-year colleges and universities, and even they were adopted slowly. With the notable exception of the "life adjustment" or "functional" curriculum offered at Stephens and later at a number of other junior colleges, radical administrative or curricular reorganization such as those at Chicago, Reed, or Columbia rarely occurred in junior colleges.

Between 1940 and 1966 a handful of major studies examined the status of general education in two-year colleges. The California State Committee on Junior Colleges in 1939-1940 reviewed 26 general education programs. While it identified a few "good" programs, it reported that most administrators had little understanding of general education, that there was no single pattern of general education, and

that few attempts were being made to evaluate program effectiveness. In 1944 James Reynolds conducted the first national assessment of general education, examining programs at 200 junior colleges. Reynolds found that most colleges failed to provide an adequate program and, like the California committee, he attributed much of the blame to a lack of leadership in the colleges (Hammons, 1979, p. 64). In a later study of California community colleges, B. Lamar Johnson (1952) was more positive about the progress in general education programs since the 1930s (Matthews, 1979). He was and remains critical of the fact that the general education curriculum is still determined largely by the transfer requirements of four-year institutions, and he concludes that much remains to be done (Johnson, 1982).

Several subsequent studies confirmed the inadequacies of general education program in junior colleges. James Reynolds (1946, p. 308) examined the permanent record of the graduates of 32 public junior colleges and concluded that the junior colleges were falling far short of providing an adequate general education program. In a study evaluating the progress of 75 colleges from 1950 to 1960, Leland Medsker (1960, p. 26) found that the majority of two-year colleges had done little to meet the objectives of general education. According to Medsker, most colleges relied on conventional academic courses, with relatively few institutions developing integrated general education courses. Three other studies by Hudson and Smith (1976), Thornton (1966), and Zimmerman (1966) examined college catalogs and found few exemplary programs; many institutions had not even defined their general education goals.

While these studies painted a picture of general education that seemed to resemble a gloomy Edvard Munch painting, it would be inappropriate to conclude that community colleges, more than were four-year institutions, were somehow more guilty for the failure of general education. Besides the forces militating against general education in all postsecondary institutions, including pressures for specialization and the growth of knowledge, community colleges faced unique problems. These include the need to develop programs to articulate with those of four-year institutions, to meet the needs of nontraditional students, and to rapidly expand occupational and community education. Moreover, comparisons with four-year institutions were ultimately futile; the fact remained that general education in the community college had been neglected and ill-served. By the end of the 1960s, most community college faculty members and administrators admitted that general education was in disarray. But only a few outspoken individuals, such as Arthur

Cohen (1969), would state in public what others would say only in private.

In summary, attempts to revitalize the common learning were made throughout the twentieth century. It was clear by the end of the 1960s, however, that most such attempts at reform had failed, and nowhere was this more clear than in the vast majority of two-year colleges. While seeking to adapt liberal education to contemporary society, most proponents of general education reform had severed the connection with the rich, potent idea of liberal education and had nothing to replace it.

Seeking to clarify the confusion over the normative concept of general education, a number of scholars and commentators have crafted definitions of general education and, in a few instances, have drawn sharp distinctions between liberal and general education (Bell, 1968; Dressel and Lorimer, 1960; Thomas, 1962). While these definitions and distinctions may have helped to clarify debate and discussion, they have in a more fundamental sense only underscored the diverse, frequently contradictory, views of general education that are held throughout postsecondary education. After examining the stated purposes of general education during three periods (1918-1930, 1943-1955, 1971-1981), Boyer and Levine (1981) identified 50 goals for general education and concluded that little consensus on the purpose and meaning of the concept exists. Other studies of the goals of general and liberal education have reached similar conclusions (Boyer and Ahlgren, 1982). Despite repeated efforts to forge commonly accepted definitions of general and liberal education, few academics agree on the meaning and purpose of the normative concept of general education.

ECLIPSE OF GENERAL EDUCATION?

In the early 1970s, a revival of interest in the condition of general education began to take place throughout higher education. Many prominent figures (Bok, 1974; Mattfeld, 1974) contended that the time had come to revitalize general education; and many others joined the same chorus (Chamberlain and Cangemi, 1975; McGrath, 1972a, 1972b; Rice, 1972). By the midpoint of the decade, the number and intensity of pronouncements concerning the status of general education had escalated dramatically (Conrad and Wyer, 1980, p. 23). Bledstein (1977), Bouwsma (1975), Cohen (1979), and McDaniel (1976), among many others, seemed to agree with Thompson (1976,p. 20) that the status of general education "is at

present very doubtful." More stridently, Murchland (1976, p. 24) wrote of the "death of the liberal arts."

While less publicized than in the four-year colleges and universities, the debate over general education also occurred in the nation's community colleges. Cohen and Brawer (1982), Lukenbill and McCabe (1978), Hammons (1979), Johnson (1982), and Piland (1981) were among those arguing for the reexamination and revitalization of general education in community colleges. These advocates, along with many faculty members and administrators in community colleges throughout the country, seemed to agree with the pronouncement of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1977, p. 11) that general education is a disaster area.

The debate over general education has generated and clarified a number of issues. Some of the more salient questions include: Should general education comprise a required common core of courses, distribution requirements, or electives? Should general education courses be organized around academic disciplines or interdisciplinary topics, themes, or problems? What knowledge and skills are most important for today's students? What should be the relationship between the personal development of students and programs of general education?

These and other issues have contributed to a considerable interest in the reexamination and revitalization of general education at both two-year and four-year colleges (Marsk, 1975; Klein, 1980). Has this renewed interest led to efforts to reinvigorate general education, or has general education already expired? The next chapter examines recent trends in general education in the two-year college and provides a partial answer to the query.

2. THE CURRENT CONDITION OF GENERAL EDUCATION

The last decade has witnessed lively discussion of the status of general education in community colleges, yet remarkably little attention has been given to careful examination of recent developments. What are the major trends in general education, and what do they portend for the future of the common learning? The purpose of this chapter is to examine recent trends systematically and then to assess the condition of general education in community colleges. The first section examines trends in four dimensions of general education: amount, structure, content, and components. The second section interprets the significance of these trends for common learning in two-year colleges.

TRENDS IN GENERAL EDUCATION

Three studies of general education represent the major sources of data for this discussion. The first study, conducted by Robert Blackburn and his colleagues at the University of Michigan, examined changing curricular practices in undergraduate curricula from 1967 to 1974 (Blackburn, Armstrong, Conrad, Didham, and McKune, 1976). Blackburn and his associates analyzed degree requirements (as stated in college catalogs) in a stratified sample of 210 four-year colleges and 61 two-year institutions. For our purposes, this study provides pertinent data regarding the amount and structure of general education requirements in two-year colleges.

A second study, or, more accurately, two separate studies, were conducted by the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education in 1975 (Levine, 1978) and 1980 (Carnegie Catalog Study, 1980). Both studies used institutional catalogs to examine general education requirements in a large sample of four-year and two-year institutions, including 61 two-year colleges in each study.* The

*With only a few exceptions, catalogs from the same two-year institutions were used in the Blackburn study and both Carnegie studies. It should be noted that neither of the Carnegie catalog studies has been published. Permission to use the Carnegie data has kindly been granted by Arthur Levine of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Carnegie catalog studies are particularly useful for our purposes because they provide a recent portrait of the structure, components, and content of general education requirements. Since the two studies can easily be compared, they also allow for the analysis of trends in general education requirements over the five-year period between the two studies. A third study, by James Hammons and his associates, surveyed deans of instruction at 150 community colleges and provides data concerning the components and content of general education programs (Hammons, Thomas, and Ward, 1980). These three studies, along with some additional data from selected sources, provide the empirical basis for an examination of recent trends in the amount, structure, components, and content of general education in two-year colleges.

Amount. When they examined catalogs from 61 (38 public and 23 private) community colleges, Blackburn and his colleagues found that general education requirements for the associate of arts (A.A.) degree diminished between 1967 and 1974. As a proportion of the two-year curriculum, general education requirements declined from 58.7 percent in 1967 to 53.8 percent in 1978 (Blackburn and others, 1976, p. 12). While this decline was less than the 10 percent decline in the four-year institutions which Blackburn studied, it nevertheless represents a significant reduction in the average amount of course work in general education that was required of students.

Fully 61 percent of the institutions in the Blackburn study evidenced this trend toward reduction in general education requirements. As Table 1 shows, the average decline was 10 percent in the public and 17 percent in the private colleges, with a range of 1 to 57 percent across all two-year colleges. While a clear majority of two-year colleges reduced requirements, two secondary trends in the data merit attention: (1) 37 percent of the public community colleges actually increased requirements; and (2) private colleges were much more likely to reduce requirements (and to a greater extent) than were public two-year colleges.

Using more recent data from the two Carnegie catalog studies, Table 2 displays the range of percentages (in deciles) of undergraduate time alloted to general education in two-year institutions in 1975 and 1980. These data show that for both associate of arts (A.A.) and associate of science (A.S.) degree programs, a small reduction in general education requirements occurred between 1975 and 1980. For example, the most common (modal) percentage range of the A.A. degree program required in general education in 1975

Table 1. Trends in the Proportion of A.A. Degree Programs in General Education Requirements, 1967-1974, by Institutional Type

Institutional Type	Percentage of Institutions with Decrease	Range of Percentage Point Decreases	Average Percentage Point Decrease	Percentage of Institutions with Increase	Range of Percentage Point Increases	Average Percentage Point Increase	Percentage of Institutions with Proportion
Two-year Public	47	1-50	10	37	2-61	14	16
Two-year Private	83	1-57	17	13	9-12	10	4

Source: Blackburn and others, 1976, p. 12.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of the Proportion of A.A. and A.S. Degree Programs in General Education Requirements, 1975 and 1980 (Percentage of Colleges)

Percentage of Program Required in General Education	A.A. Degree			A.S. Degree		
	1975	1980	%Change	1975	1980	%Change
0	1	1	0	1	7	+6
1-10	0	2	+2	5	5	0
11-20	5	11	+6	10	15	+5
21-30	12	4	−8	16	15	−1
31-40	11	16	+5	16	23	+7
41-50	11	15	+4	12	7	−5
51-60	8	16	+8	10	14	+4
61-70	16	19	+3	7	6	−1
71-80	2	10	+8	2	7	+5
81-90	19	4	−15	5	0	−5
91-100	15	2	−13	16	3	−13

Source: "Carnegie Catalog Study, 1975," see also Levine, 1978; "Carnegie Catalog Study, 1980," unpublished.

was 81 to 90 percent, while in 1980 the mode had dropped to 61 to 70 percent. A large percentage of the institutions requiring a large proportion of work in general education in 1975 reduced their requirements by 1980.

Table 2 also shows that the actual amount of required general education varies as much as it possibly could. In both 1975

and 1980, the associate of arts and associate of science degrees required between 0 and 100 percent of the program to be in general education. This variability in general education requirements is significant, for it indicates a very uneven commitment to general education across two-year colleges.

In summary, a diminution in the amount of work required in general education from 1967 to 1980 occurred as a substantial proportion of community colleges eliminated one or more of their general education requirements. This overall trend, however, must be qualified in three respects. First, some institutions actually increased their requirements, and a small portion made no changes whatsoever. Second, there has been, and continues to be, great variability across institutions in terms of the amount required in general education. Third, a majority of degree programs still require that students take at least one-third (A.S. degree) to one-half (A.A. degree) of their degree program in general education. Despite all of these caveats, however, the overall conclusion remains: The amount of work required in general education in most two-year colleges has declined in the last 15 years.

Structure. Blackburn and his colleagues (1976) examined the structure of general education requirements in terms of three types of courses, with each type reflecting a different degree of freedom of choice for students. *Prescribed* courses were defined as those specific courses that each student is required to take in order to complete her/his general education requirements. *Distribution* courses were defined as those courses within a content division, department, or specified group, from which a student must choose a certain number (for example, two of five courses in the humanities). *Free* courses were defined as those that are taken to fulfill the general education requirement, but that are otherwise unrestricted. Unlike distribution courses, where students have some choice among specified alternatives but not unlimited selection, free courses permit students to choose any course either within or across content divisions, departments, or groups to satisfy their general education requirements.

As displayed in Table 3, the Blackburn study found that the structure of general education course requirements changed between 1967 and 1974. By 1974, the proportion of prescribed general education had dropped by 15 percent. This trend was accompanied by a slight increase in distribution courses by 6 percent, but especially by an increase in free courses by 9 percent.

Table 3. Trends in the Proportion of General Education Requirements in Prescribed, Distribution, and Free Courses, 1967 and 1974.

Structure	1967	1974	%Change
Prescribed	49	34	−15
Distribution	43	49	+6
Free	8	17	+9

Note: Includes only associate of arts (A.A.) degree programs.

Source: Blackburn and others, 1976, p. 12.

Blackburn and his colleagues also found that the proportion of prescribed courses dropped in 75 percent of the two-year colleges (the proportion of prescribed general education courses at the remaining institutions either stayed the same or increased slightly). Many of these institutions, and the handful of other schools that witnessed a decline in free courses, assigned a greater proportion of general education to distribution courses, but the small overall increase in that category disguised two different shifts. Institutions with a large proportion of prescribed courses in 1967 tended to increase their proportion of distribution courses by 1974, but institutions that began with a large proportion of distribution courses tended to increase the proportion of free courses. While only 28 percent of the two-year institutions included more free courses in their general education requirements in 1974 than they did in 1967, the institutions that increased their proportion of free courses changed more than those that shifted from prescribed to distribution courses (Blackburn and others, 1976, pp. 13-15).

Carnegie Catalog Study (1980) also looked at the structure of general education requirements. Unlike the Blackburn study, however, which examined the nature of general education courses, the Carnegie study looked at the overall structure of general education requirements. As a basis for that examination, the Carnegie study identified three major structures of general education requirements (one of which has three forms). *Core* curricula were defined as programs that are based on a tightly knit, yet broad and often interdisciplinary, series of courses required of all students. *Distribution* curricula were broadly defined as programs requiring students to take a minimum number of courses within specified areas of the general education curriculum. Three major forms of distribution requrements were delineated: prescribed, minimally prescribed or "smorgasbord." and recommended distribution guidelines. *Prescribed* distribution requirements include some combination of required courses, student course options from short preselected lists, and a limited number of electives in designated areas. *Minimally prescribed* (or "smorgasbord") distribution requirements generally require few if any specified courses, but a certain number of courses must be taken within designated areas of the curriculum (for example, students might be required to take one course each in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences). *Recommended* distribution requirements are the same as "smorgasbord" distribution requirements except that they are not required; that is, students can either satisfy the requirements or simply ignore them. Finally, in the third major structure of general education, the *elective* curriculum, no general education program is specified by the college.

Table 4 displays the findings of the 1980 Carnegie Catalog Study regarding the structure of general education requirements in two-year colleges. As the table shows, two of the three major structures of general education are used in only a small fraction of institutions: 1 percent of all community colleges has no general education program (elective curriculum) and, at the other extreme, only a very small percentage of colleges have a core curriculum. The distribution approach is used in approximately 95 percent of all two-year colleges. Further, nearly three-fourths of all community colleges use prescribed distribution requirements, with the bulk of the remaining institutions employing minimally prescribed, "smorgasbord" requirements.

In summary, the Carnegie Catalog Study (1975 and 1980) and the Blackburn findings can be used to paint a broad picture of the structure of general education requirements in the last 15 years.

Table 4. Overall Structure of General Education Requirements, by Degree, 1980 (Percentage of Colleges)

Structure	A.A. Degree	A.S. Degree
Elective	1	1
Distribution		
Recommended Distribution Guidelines	0	1
Minimally Prescribed or Smorgasbord Requirements	25	28
Prescribed Distribution Requirements	73	68
Core	2	1

Source: "Carnegie Catalog Study, 1980," unpublished.

Perhaps most significantly, almost all two-year colleges have adopted a distribution approach to general education consisting of a few required courses, a limited number of elective courses and, in most instances, a relatively large number of distribution courses. The growth and popularity of the distribution approach—which includes required, elective, and distribution courses under its wide umbrella—has masked the gradual, almost imperceptible, reduction in the overall amount of specification in programs of general education, a trend most clear in the gradual elimination of required courses between 1967 and 1974. Aside from one or two required courses, most community colleges have moved away from any notion of general education as a common , shared educational experience in which students take roughly the same program of general studies. In short, the architecture of general education requirements has become less and less restrictive in recent years as most two-year colleges have given students greater freedom to design their own general education program.

Table 5. Trends in the Content of General Education Programs, 1967-1974 (Percentage of Colleges Requiring Courses)*

Content	1967	1974	%Change
English Composition	97	90	−9
Mathematics	21	16	−5
Foreign Language	28	13	−15
Physical Education	79	57	−22
Average			−13

*Includes only associate of arts (A.A.) degree programs.

Source: Blackburn and others, 1976, p. 12.

Content. Accompanying the reduction in the amount of work required in general education and the loosening of the structure of general education has been a change in the content of general education requirements in the last 15 years. According to the Carnegie conceptual scheme, the three content areas of general education are advanced learning skills courses, field distribution courses, and general courses. *Advanced learning* skills are tools that students generally need to sustain college-level study, and they include courses in English composition, mathematics, foreign language, and physical education. *Field distribution* courses involve no specified courses, but refer to courses taken in one or more of three broad areas: science, social science, and humanities. *General understanding* courses are intended to give students a broad learning experience and include such subjects as fine arts and religion (Levine, 1978, p. 20).

The Blackburn study examined trends in the four courses included as advanced learning skills. As shown in **Table 5**, Blackburn and others found that each of these four subjects were required by fewer institutions in 1974 than in 1967. For example, English composition and foreign language requirements declined 9 percent and 15 percent, respectively, in two-year colleges.

Table 6. Trends in the Content of General Education Programs, 1975-1980 (Percentage of Colleges Requiring Courses)*

Content	1975	1980	%Change
Advanced Learning Skills Courses			
English Composition	79	86	+7
Mathematics	50	27	−23
Foreign Language	18	5	−13
Physical Education	67	65	−2
Average			−8
Field Distribution Courses			
Science	77	73	−4
Social Science	82	79	−3
Humanities	78	77	−1
Average			−3
General Understanding Courses			
Religion	14	11	−3
Fine Arts	16	12	−4
Average			−3

*Includes associate of arts (A.A.) and associate of science (A.S.) degree programs.

Source: "Carnegie Catalog Study, 1980."

The Carnegie catalog studies also examined trends in the content of general education and found that community and junior college requirements declined in all three of the major content areas between 1975 and 1980. With the notable exception of English composition, which increased 7 percent, courses in advanced learning skills were no longer required at a substantial number of institutions. Nearly one out of every four colleges dropped a mathematics requirement and more than one in eight eliminated language requirements. In the two other content areas, there were modest declines in the pro-

portion of institutions requiring certain courses. As Table 6 shows, both field distribution and general understanding courses were required at approximately 3 percent fewer institutions in 1980 than in 1975.

In 1979 James Hammons and his colleagues examined the content of general education programs, paying particular attention to field distribution courses. Hammons and others found that 86 percent of two-year colleges required course work in the sciences, 94 percent in the social sciences, and 85 percent in the humanities (Hammons, Thomas, and Ward, 1980, p. 24). Hammons' findings are generally consistent with those of the Carnegie studies.

The findings of these three studies reveal two major changes in the content of general education in the last 15 years. First, there has been a decline in the importance placed on two of the three major content areas, advanced learning skills and "general understanding" courses, evidenced by the elimination of required courses in these areas in many two-year colleges. Aside from English composition courses, which were eliminated as requirements at some institutions between 1967 and 1974 but were later reinstated, all three of the remaining kinds of courses included under advanced learning skills (mathematics, foreign language, physical education) were dropped at a large number of institutions between 1967 and 1980. General courses such as religion and fine arts were eliminated at a few institutions from 1974 to 1980 (although they were not widely required in 1971, either), and are now represented in any one out of ten community colleges.

Second, while the proportion of institutions requiring field distribution courses has dropped slightly, most community colleges now require students to take the majority of their general studies in field distribution courses. In effect, the gradual elimination of required courses in advanced learning skills and general understanding courses has left institutions with only one remaining option: field distribution courses—courses in which students choose from among groups of courses within major content areas.

The broader significance of these two trends is that most community colleges simply can no longer reach agreement on what content should be included in general education. Beyond a couple of required courses (usually including English composition and physical education), institutions are saying that students should determine the content of their own program by selecting courses from within the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. By failing to agree on what constitutes the common learning, most two-year

colleges have moved a long way from the idea of general education as a relatively fixed body of content that is shared by all students who choose to call themselves generally educated.

Components. While there are no recent data concerning trends in the components of general education, the 1980 Carnegie catalog study collected some pertinent data concerning five major types of general education courses: survey, advanced disciplinary, interdisciplinary, freshman seminar, and great books. *Survey* courses are introductory disciplinary courses which provide an overview and introduction to an academic field. *Advanced disciplinary* courses are specialized courses within a discipline (for example, "European and American Sculpture"). *Interdisciplinary* courses are courses that combine two or more disciplines (for example, "Freedom and Order" taught by faculty from philosophy, history, and political science). *Freshmen seminars* are small classes broadly concerned with orienting freshmen to college, writing, and general education. *Great books* courses are organized around "classic" books which embody the heritage of Western civilization (Levine, 1978, pp. 18-19, p. 525-526).

As **Table 7** shows, the survey course is clearly the most popular type of general education course in community colleges. According to the Carnegie Catalog Study, discipline-based survey courses are taught in all community college offering the associate of arts degree, and in 99 out of every 100 colleges offering the associate of science degree. In sharp contrast, interdisciplinary courses—which used to comprise a substantial proportion of general education course offerings—are taught in only one of ten institutions. Hammons and his associates also found that the survey course taught from a single disciplinary point of view was the most popular general education course in the two-year college. Interdisciplinary courses were offered in less than one in six community colleges in their sample of institutions (Hammons, Thomas, and Ward, 1980, p. 25). Freshman seminars and advanced disciplinary courses are offered in even fewer institutions, and great book courses are simply not offered in two-year colleges.

The fact that the introductory survey course is the major vehicle of satisfying distribution requirements suggests that the introductory survey course has become a cornerstone of general education in the two-year college, just as the distribution approach and field distribution courses have come to dominate the structure and to circumscribe to content of general education. Unlike the broad, synoptic interdisciplinary survey courses that were popular in

Table 7. Components of General Education Programs, by Degree, 1980 (Percentage of College Offerings)

General Education Component	A.A. Degree	A.S. Degree
Survey Courses (Disciplinary)	100	99
Advanced Disciplinary Courses	4	5
Interdisciplinary Courses	11	11
Freshman Seminars	4	14
Great Books Courses	0	0

Source: "Carnegie Catalog Study, 1980."

the 1960s, most of today's survey courses are aimed largely at providing students with a depth of knowledge in a single discipline (even allowing for considerable variation in the way courses are taught). By allowing the individual disciplines to dominate course offerings in general education, most community colleges have turned away from the idea of general education as a broad, integrative experience that aims to develop the whole person and seeks to equip students with a breadth of knowledge. Disciplinary perspectives and discipline-based knowledge have clearly taken over general education in the two-year college.

EROSION OF GENERAL EDUCATION?

Trends in the last fifteen years clearly establish that in the majority of community colleges, general education has not experienced a renaissance. To the contrary, most signs indicate that general education in the two-year college is in decline and disarray. What are these signs?

First, and most obvious, the average amount of course work required in general education has been reduced. Second, there has been a loosening of structure in programs of general education.

Students have been given greater freedom in shaping their programs, largely through a distribution approach in which few courses are required and most courses are either electives or selected from groups of courses. The significance for the common learning of this greater freedom is that many community colleges have simply abandoned the idea that general education should consist of common, shared learning experiences.

Third, changes in the content of general education have also undercut the common learning. Since the widely preferred approach to organizing general education is the distribution structure, fewer courses are now required in content areas usually considered central to a general education. With the single exception of English composition, required courses designed to enhance students' advanced learning skills have been dropped in many colleges, and general understanding courses are now offered in only a small proportion of community colleges. Perhaps more significantly, the widespread adoption of the contemporary distribution system, which includes only a few required courses, with mostly elective and distribution courses, suggests that there is no longer any agreement about the content that should be included in the common learning.

Fourth, the discipline-based survey course, largely replacing the interdisciplinary survey course in most colleges, has been firmly established as the major component of general education. As a consequence, the basic unit of general education, the individual course, has come to be dominated by disciplinary perspectives and narrowly focused disciplinary knowledge rather than by a concern with breadth of knowledge and the development of the whole person.

No so long ago, leaders in the junior college movement argued that concern for the education of the whole person, and particularly for her or his general education, should come first in the junior college. In the last few years, by reducing and loosening requirements in general education, community colleges are not only seeming to say that general education is not as important as it once was, but also that they are no longer sure what an "educated person" is. The consequence of this confusion over purpose and meaning is that at the very least, general education is gradually fading in importance; more likely, it is slowly, but steadily, being eclipsed. In either case, there seems to be little doubt that general education is in decline and disarray in the majority of community colleges.

The findings and conclusions presented here indicate that no widespread attempt has been made to revive general education in

the majority of two-year colleges in recent years; nevertheless, change and innovation have occurred in a few community colleges. The next chapter examines recent reforms—reforms which suggest that there is still hope for those who would revive common learning throughout the two-year college.

3. CHANGE AND INNOVATION IN GENERAL EDUCATION*

Notwithstanding the decline and disarray described in the preceding chapter, some community colleges have been reexamining their general education program and have been introducing major reforms. Description and analysis of this activity remains scant. In partial remedy of such a scarcity of information, this chapter describes change and innovation in a sample of two-year colleges and offers reflections upon the consequences of the present reform impulse to revitalize general education in two-year institutions. The first section of the chapter delineates three emerging models of general education; the second section identifies ten underlying trends in recent reforms; and the third section discusses the significance of these developments for the rejuvenatioin of common learning.

This description and analysis is based on a review of curricular developments in 11 community colleges where major modifications in general education curricula have recently occurred. Since no current listing exists of colleges that have recently introduced reforms, random selection of institutions was not possible. As an alternative approach, a review of related literature and the suggestions of experts in the field guided the selection process. While these institutions are certainly not representative of all community colleges that have introduced reforms, it is reasonable to assume that they comprise a representative sample of those institutions where recent innovations in general education have emerged with high visibility.

A wide range of data was collected and analyzed from the 11 institutions included in the sample. The major sources of data included college catalogs, brochures, course syllabi and course reading materials, curriculum committee reports, staff papers, journal articles, newsletters, and correspondence and interviews with college representatives. These data—a rich source of information for understanding change—provided a helpful context for interpreting both the substance and process of curricular reform.**

*This chapter was co-authored with Jeanette Baker.

** In discussing examples of curricular innovation, we have taken the liberty of freely adapting descriptions found in unpublished documents without citing the source, except in those cases where specific information is clearly attributable to a particular individual.

EMERGING MODELS OF GENERAL EDUCATION

The review of recent reforms in general education evolved with an eye for any new models of general education, in general, and innovative alternatives to distribution structure, in particular. An "anecdotal approach" to model-building was used in which models were abstracted on the basis of specific institutional reforms. This approach may be criticized because it does not necessarily result in the development of a generic typology that sharply distinguishes between different models at the conceptual level (Conrad and Wyer, 1980, pp. 36-37). However, an anecdotal approach is particularly well-suited to the initial development of models because it permits the drawing of distinctions between alternative approaches that have actually been implemented. Anecdotal models also provide an excellent medium for capturing the richness of curricular reforms. Surfacing from the review of sample institutions were three innovative approaches to designing general education programs: integrative, interdisciplinary/distribution, and competency-based.

Integrative Model. The integrative model provides one alternative to the traditional discipline-based curriculum by connecting knowledge across disciplines through a focus on specific themes, problems, or broad areas of knowledge. While all programs based on this model attempt to integrate knowledge, a variety of approaches exists. Some integrative programs rely on courses that draw content and faculty from more than one discipline in an attempt to move away from disciplinary control of general education. In other words, interdisciplinarity represents a frequent, but not a necessary attribute of integrative curricula (Conrad and Wyer, 1980, p. 46). Moreover, some programs organize the entire general education program around a particular topic or theme, while most others organize specific courses or groups of courses around integrative themes or major areas of knowledge. Regardless of approach, however, all integrative programs emphasize the relatedness of knowledge across and between traditional academic disciplines.

The general education program at Los Medanos College in California exemplifies an integrative approach (Los Medanos, 1980; Carhart, 1973). Any student at Los Medanos seeking an A.A. or A.S. degree must complete a highly structured, integrative pattern of 26 units in general education. Of these units, 20 are based on courses in specific disciplines and the remaining 6 units are taken in two interdisciplinary courses.

The major component of the general education curriculum consists of the 20 units in general education courses taught from an intradisciplinary perspective. To meet this requirement, each student must take one course from among three or four courses offered in each of six basic areas: physical science, biological science, social science, behavioral science, language arts, and humanistic studies. In the behavioral science area, for example, a student may select the specified general education course in psychology, sociology, or anthropology.

Where this approach differs from the "standard" distribution approach is in the fact that although these 20 units of general education courses are offered within specific disciplines, they are taught from a perspective that emphasizes relationships among disciplines within a general area of knowledge. Each course must (1) be interdisciplinary and include, along with content unique to itself, the fundamental concepts, principles, values, generalizations, attitudes, and belief systems common to other disciplines in a given "family" (for example, social science); (2) teach the modes of inquiry indigenous to the discipline; (3) teach the aesthetic qualities of the content of the discipline; (4) explore the implications of the knowledge of the discipline; (5) provide opportunities for learners to develop higher cognitive skills through reading and writing; (6) provide opportunities for learners to enhance their effectiveness in thinking; (7) introduce creative processes and examples of human creativity; and (8) encourage learners to consider the variety of perspectives, experiences, and persuasions that have an impact on society.

In addition to six required intradisciplinary courses, each student must also take two interdisciplinary "capstone" courses that integrate knowledge across the six basic areas. These two courses involve students in the analysis of major societal issues, emphasizing knowledge integration, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and self-directed learning.

Begun in 1973, the general education program at Los Medanos reflects a strong commitment to general education on the part of the board, administration, and faculty, based on the belief that general education should be "a hub of the total curriculum" (Collins and Drexel, 1976, p. 3). Heavy faculty involvement in planning courses, workshops, and other developmental activities further supports faculty in their teaching of general education courses. Moreover, students and faculty participate in periodic review and

program modification. The program at Los Medanos offers a bold, alternative approach to providing an integrative program of general education.

Interdisciplinary/Distribution Model. This model combines a required core of interdisciplinary courses with a distribution requirement that allows students some flexibility in selecting from restricted lists of courses in prescribed subject areas. This approach is similar to the integrative model, except that greater emphasis falls on the distribution structure and interdisciplinary courses required of all students. Since an interdisciplinary/distribution model represents the most popular of the new approaches to general education, I include four variations of this effort.

At Miami-Dade Community College, the general education program for the A.A. degree consists of 36 credits, including 15 hours in a general education core, 15 hours in a distribution requirement, and 6 elective credits (Lukenbill and McCabe, 1978). The general education core required of all degree-seeking students consists of five interdisciplinary courses: Communication, Humanities, The Social Environment, Energy in the Natural Environment, and The Individual in Transition. All five core courses emphasize several common themes: understanding other cultures, developing a historical perspective, understanding the global dimension, understanding the relationship between environment and the quality of life, and improving communication skills.

Each of the required core courses is also designed to meet specific goals from a list of 26 overall goals for the general education program. (Goals concerning problem-solving and communication skills are addressed in all five core courses.) In addition, specific objectives and evaluation criteria are described for each course. For example, the objectives of the "Communications" course are represented as five competencies, accompanied by specific criteria for achieving each of those competencies.

The distribution requirement of the general education program at Miami-Dade consists of five courses: one each from humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and communications, plus one additional course from one of the first three areas. Each campus of Miami-Dade designates a short list of courses that satisfy this requirement. In addition to meeting one or more of the general education goals of the college, each course provides students with an introduction to a specific discipline and emphasizes relationships among disciplines within the same major area.

Miami-Dade's general education program resulted from an institutional self-study begun in 1974. After a lengthy planning process and implementation of a range of support services—such as basic skills assessment, progress alert system, standards of academic progress (Kelly and Anadam, 1979)—the first courses were offered in the fall, 1981. While the new program at Miami-Dade remains the most visible of the innovative approaches to general education in two-year colleges, two other colleges in Florida have also recently implemented variations of the interdisciplinary/distribution model (Kelly, 1981).

Six years ago, Valencia Community College adopted a new general education program (I.D.S., 1980). Limited to highly motivated students and offered on only one of the college's three campuses, the program offers students an alternative to the traditional distribution requirements. The program consists of 24 hours in an interdisciplinary core program and 12 hours in elective courses (including one required course in political science). Under this approach, electives are substituted for the distribution component of the interdisciplinary/distribution model.

An 18-point statement that speaks to competence in knowledge and thinking, communicating, and integrating defines Valencia's 24-hour core program, "Interdisciplinary Studies in General Education." The core program "seeks to re-integrate the curriculum and to return to the original purpose of general education — to create an enlightened and liberal citizenry, [by making] ... a student aware of the processes by which knowledge is acquired and ... assist[ing] the student in mastering these processes ... even if it be at the expense of 'coverage' of subject matter" (I.D.S., 1980, p. 2).

Valencia's core program consists of four required courses, of six credits each, spread over a two-year period. The first course in the sequence reveals the interdisciplinary emphasis that pervades the entire program. In this introductory course, students encounter the process of rational thought, with examples of how people have organized their thinking to define human values and the physical universe. The course focuses on the ancient Greeks' contributions to this process, compares them to modern culture, and attempts to integrate the disciplines of physics, mathematics, language, rhetoric, and the humanities.

The general education program at Santa Fe Community College, implemented in fall, 1979, resulted from a four-year curriculum review process. The core of Santa Fe's general education

program consists of five courses referred to as "Integrated Learning: Key Courses," the course offerings include "Introduction to Humanities," "Introduction to the Social Sciences," "Modern World History," and two English courses. The Key Courses are designed to reflect a central goal of general education: "to develop subject relevancy to concurrent fields of learning with prescribed courses serving as synaptic bridges" (Sullins, 1979, p. 6).

The distribution requirement of the Santa Fe curriculum includes a course in mathematics; two from the humanities; and one each from the social sciences, the biological sciences, the physical sciences; and personal growth and development. All distribution courses have broad objectives in consonance with the general education goals of the college.

By way of final contrast and comparison, Catonsville Community College in Maryland is now in the process of implementing a general education program consisting of two required core courses, two English composition courses, a "life fitness" course, and four courses from a "limited distribution system." The two core courses are interdisciplinary—designed to improve the student's abilities to reason, solve problems, and communicate, and to expose students to a variety of ways of learning and knowing. As an example, the core course entitled "Explorations of Ideas in Imagery" explores the thought processes of individuals who have constructed verbal and non-verbal images of reality by examining the works of Jan Van Eyck and Degas, Bach and Beethoven, Goethe and Joyce.

When fully implemented, the distribution segment at Catonsville will require each student to take one course from each of the following areas: Studies in the Natural World, Numerical Concepts, Studies in Human Values, and Studies in Groups and Institutions. In this "limited distribution system," students select from a list of 18 courses in Studies in the Natural World, seven courses in Numerical Concepts, and lists of ten courses each in the remaining two areas. Each list contains courses intended to emphasize the fundamentals of that learning area.

At present, the two interdisciplinary core courses at Catonsville are undergoing a period of trial. If the entire general education program receives approval in the spring of 1983, full implementation will occur in the fall of that year.

Competency-Based Model. Competency-based programs are anchored in the belief not only that an educated person can be described, but also that the description represents an important tool

in the curricular design. Thus, competency-based programs proceed with reference to desired outcomes or competencies that students must achieve in order to complete their general education requirements. In terms of assessment, competency-based programs vary in the relative emphasis placed on broad generic skills and behaviorally demonstrated skills. Most competency-based programs focus on skills, however, as opposed to the more traditional testing of certain facts in given areas of knowledge. As Ewens (1979, pp. 173-174) states:

> Competence-based liberal education not only controverts traditional practice by its emphasis on the assessment of specified competencies but it also controverts the traditional view of liberal education by its concern for behavior rather than for theoretic knowledge .... In short, whatever the role of theoretic knowledge in relation to competence, competence is understood to involve something more than such knowledge.

In 1977 the Dallas County Community College District began to identify those values, attitudes, and skills for life which might guide a curricular design processx. Labeled "Skills for Living," these educational outcomes are defined as skills that enable individuals to evaluate and adjust to everyday personal and social situations in ways beneficial to the individual and society (Shaw, 1981).

The Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) has identified eight competency areas: (1) living with yourself; (2) living with others; (3) living with environments; (4) living as a producer; (5) living as a consumer; (6) living in the community; (7) living creatively; and (8) living in the future. Each competency area includes basic organizing assumptions, goal directives, and appropriate competency statements. While the competency statements remain general in order to allow for latitude in interpretation, some common threads exist across the areas. Five of the eight competency areas emphasize communication skills and values, three of the eight share competency statements relating to problem-solving, and two of the eight have competency statements concerned with cultural heritage.

The DCCCD general education program attempts to integrate attitudes, values, and skills throughout the existing curriculum by incorporating this concept of competency in the design of

all new programs and courses. Many instructors have identified Skills for Living taught in existing courses, and some have revised course objectives to reflect more directly the values, attitudes, and life skills set forth in the competency statements. Significantly, this integration, effected throughout the curriculum rather than through an interdisciplinary approach or a core curriculum, indicates that general education is not confined to a specified set of courses but is made available throughout the entire curriculum.

The Skills for Living program was developed at Cedar Valley College, one of seven colleges that comprise the Dallas County Community College District (Clowes, 1979). If the program receives approval through the district, full implementation will follow within the next several years.

TRENDS IN INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

In order to assess the significance of recent innovations in general education, one needs to examine the changes carefully for any commonalities that signal a revitalization of the common learning. Here, there was a need to determine the existence of any underlying trends in curricular reforms that cut across the sample institutions. Besides goal statements and program objectives, a range of documents from each of the colleges received scrutiny. Based upon the analysis of these materials, ten trends surfaced that apparently influenced the development and design of these innovative general education programs: (1) the strengthening of basic skills; (2) the integration of knowledge; (3) the preparation for living in a rapidly changing society; (4) an awareness of values; (5) a global perspective; (6) communication skills; (7) critical thinking skills; (8) a vocational/liberal fusion; (9) the use of computer technology; and (10) a focus on outcomes.

Basic Skills. Perhaps the effort to strengthen basic skills represents the most obvious trend in recent reforms. Nearly all of the programs in our sample expected basic competency in reading, writing, and mathematics (computation). Some colleges specify outcomes relating to basic skills in their general education programs, while others treat these skills as prerequisites. For example, four colleges—Miami-Dade, Los Medanos, Santa Fe, and Monroe Community College—require competencies in basic skills for entry into the general education program. Each of these colleges has devised assessment tech-

niques and developmental programs in an attempt to insure appropriate student preparation for general education courses.

While the most common approach to teaching basic skills is through developmental or "basic skills" courses, some colleges are attempting to integrate these skills in courses throughout the entire curriculum. For example, Daytona Beach Community College is in the process of implementing a state-mandated college-level computation and communication skills program. The College Level Academic Skills Program (CLASP) is described in a short document that lists and defines what the State of Florida has designated as college-level communication and computation skills (Florida Department of Education, 1982). Many of the skills seem quite basic: recognizing the main ideas of a passage represents one example of a reading skill; placing modifiers correctly and using standard verb forms reflects a basic writing skill; and adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing positive rational numbers account for some of the basic computation skills. CLASP also focuses on more advanced communication and computation skills such as expository writing and understanding concepts of probability, logical reasoning, and computer technology. The CLASP program at Daytona Beach presents an interesting image of how one state is attempting to insure that its citizens possess certain basic skills.

Integration of Knowledge. The emphasis being placed on the integration of knowledge across disciplines represents a highly significant trend in innovative programs, as manifested by the number of colleges now requiring one or more interdisciplinary courses in their general education program. In this sample alone, almost three-fourths of the colleges require at least one such course, and several require two or more courses.

Interdisciplinary courses evolve in several different ways. In some colleges, an interdisciplinary course may emphasize the connections between two or more disciplines. In others, a course may examine a single subject area from the disparate vantage points of two or more disciplines. Regardless of the approach, however, all of these interdisciplinary courses are designed to overcome fragmentation in learning by helping students to integrate knowledge across academic disciplines. The following three examples of interdisciplinary courses show how different colleges have sought to encourage students to integrate knowledge.

At Santa Fe Community College, the required interdisciplinary humanities course is divided into three "temperaments"; Classical, Romantic, and Realistic. Characteristics of each tempera-

ment are examined as they occur in the literary, visual, and performing arts. In addition, students read a related biography or autobiography of a person from another discipline area (science, psychology, history) who exemplifies the characteristics of each temperament. In an interesting twist, the course outline also indicates that each temperament is "approached by showing twentieth century examples of individual works which [and then] related with works of the past to point out that essential characteristics are the same for each temperament in any age" (Sullins, 1979).

"Energy in the Natural Environment," a required core course at Miami-Dade Community College, attempts to integrate knowledge across the social and natural sciences. The syllabus itself reflects the interdisciplinary character of the course, as shown in the following excerpt: "The student will demonstrate comprehension of the historical development of energy use by describing the changes in the amount and type of energy that the United States has used and possible economic, social, and technological changes that might occur if this pattern continues." A Faculty Resource Notebook, developed by the course development committee, provides an annotated list of recommended background readings for faculty preparing to teach the course. These readings represent a variety of disciplines and suggest the interdisciplinary cast of the course.

According to the course outline for "Exploration of Nature and Society," an experimental general education course at Catonsville Community College, common themes of inquiry and critical choices are traced through the works of prominent contributors from a variety of disciplines. For example, the works of Darwin and Marx are contrasted and compared in the study of change. The Core Committee reports that providing students with opportunities to integrate various fields of knowledge is a major justification of this core approach.

Preparation for a Changing Society. Many of the curricular rationales and supporting materials reviewed here indicated a need to provide students with skills and abilities to cope in a rapidly changing, highly technological society. A variety of approaches surfaced: some stress broad intellectual skills and competencies; others emphasize personal development; all place major emphasis on the individual in relation to society and its institutions.

In this regard, the "Skills for Living" program in the Dallas County Community College District (Shaw, 1981) is designed to help "students equip themselves for effective living and for responsible

citizenship in a rapidly changing local, state, national, and world community." The competencies expected of students are directed toward living with oneself, with others, with environments, in the community, and in the future.

In describing the general education program at Los Medanos College, Charles Collins (1979) indicates that the subject matter is chosen for the program to provide knowledge that will directly help students cope in a complex, changing world. To this end, the 20-unit base of interdisciplinary courses acquaints students with principal modes of inquiry, some of the major implications of knowledge, opportunities for independent and critical thinking, an introduction to creative processes: in short, a variety of perspectives and experiences believed to have an impact on society. In addition, Los Medanos' two capstone courses establish a template to help students develop reasoning skills and self-directed learning skills that will aid them in coping with a rapidly changing society.

"The Individual in Transition," a required general education course at Miami-Dade Community College, has similar goals. The course examines such issues as values clarification, stress and anxiety, child rearing, nutrition, intimate relationships, effective communication and confrontation, aggression and assertiveness, and the impact of nonfamilial relationships on the individual.

Values. Value awareness bears a close relationship to preparation for life in a changing society. The ability to adapt to change, whether fast-paced or slow-paced, needs the direction offered by certain valued solidarities. In all of the colleges studied here, values education proposed not to indoctrinate students with particular values, but to encourage an awareness of the value implications of issues and an ability to examine systematically questions involving values. While a few colleges offer separate courses in values, the most popular approach involves an integration of values concerns throughout the general education curriculum.

At Platte Technical Community College, one of the major goals of general education courses is the development of values. To complete the general education program, a student must take one of four courses in each of three "clusters": a Business and Industrial Cluster; a Creative and Social Cluster; and a Science and Health Cluster. According to course outlines, at least one course in each cluster addresses values or values implications. For example, the Business and Industrial Cluster contains a course entitled "Current Issues in Society" that is designed to develop the values, under-

standing, and participation of an individual in a free social, political, and economic society. Two courses in the Creative and Social Cluster deal with the study of values. In one course, "The Fine Arts," a major objective concerns helping students assess individual and social values through an understanding of the arts. The second course, "The Mass Media," emphasizes the nature of media composition and its impact on individuals and the public, encouraging students to communicate their own values in relationship to experiences with the media. Students are also expected to reexamine their values in the light of knowledge they gain about media composition in the course. In comparison, one of the two major objectives of "The Earth and its Environment," a course offered in the Science and Health Cluster, is to study environmental factors affecting man's relationship to the earth and its resources. According to the course syllabus, topics include air and water pollution and how they affect the environment, limitations imposed on humanity by the earth's resources, arguments for and against nuclear power and other alternate energy sources—all topics with values implications.

"An Ethical Inquiry into Societal Issues," a required capstone course in the general education program at Los Medanos College, studies values and ethics. Two important goals of the course are to investigate the assumptions underpinning individual and societal values and to search out in societal issues the major values components and ethical ramifications. Topics in the course include: energy and its implications for ecology, the limits of economic growth, equality and justice between the sexes, equality and justice among racial and ethnic groups, and a search for a basic for ethics. At Valencia Community College, course descriptions of the four required courses in the Interdisciplinary Studies in General Education program indicate that the study of values takes up a portion of three of the four required courses.

Global Perspective. An awareness of values and a preparation for living with change are allied with yet another trend: enhancing students' global perspective. Several of the curricula reviewed here emphasized the importance of cultivating an appreciation and understanding of the fact that societies do not exist in isolation, but in increasing interdependence with each other. The most widely employed approach to "internationalizing" the curriculum is to offer one or more courses that stress cross-cultural knowledge, examine global issues and dynamics and, in some cases, attempt to encourage understanding of, empathy for, and the ability to com-

municate with people from different cultures. For instance, the general education distribution requirements at Monroe Community College recommend that at least one 3-unit course in humanities or social science concern non-Western culture and/or global interdependence.

At Los Medanos College, the faculty saw from the beginning of the review process that a primary task in the general education program should be to help students educate themselves to cope with world problems. Accordingly, the required course entitled "An Ethical Inquiry into Societal Issues" considers contemporary societal issues and their impact on societies other than one's own. Major topics in the course include the global impact of economic growth, world-wide depletion of natural resources, and the role of America as a world leader.

At Miami-Dade Community College, a global perspective characterizes the required course on the environment—"Energy in the Natural Environment." In this course students analyze the influence of technology on the global environment. The Faculty Resource Notebook lists the following objectives for the course: the student will analyze how the world's population problems affect the world's energy availability and utilization; the student will compare energy utilization rates per capita in industrialized countries with those in nonindustrialized countries; and the student will identify which energy sources are presently in use and relate each to general geographical locations throughout the world.

Communication Skills. Every general education curriculum examined emphasized the improvement of communication skills. These skills are susceptible to a variety of definitions, but usually encompass reading comprehension, writing, speaking, and listening effectively. Most general education programs require at least one course in English composition and many require two or more. (Some colleges refer to their courses as advanced composition and require proficiency at some basic level for entry into the courses.) In addition, most colleges emphasize various communications skills in part or all of their general education program.

At Miami-Dade Community College, the first two goals of the general education program state that students will be able to speak, listen, write, and read competently and in an organized manner, and will also be able to communicate effectively with individuals in the different aspects of their lives. Similarly, at Los Medanos College, all general education courses, including the required

intradisciplinary course, must provide opportunities for students to develop higher cognitive skills in reading and writing.

The competency-based program in the Dallas County Community College District lists verbal and nonverbal communication, listening skills, effective communication in work situations, and recognition of possibilities for communication in the future as means to attain required competencies. At Valencia Community College, a goal of the Interdisciplinary Studies Program is that students have the ability to express their own ideas in a variety of modes, such as essays, poems, and speeches.

Platte Technical Community College requires six hours of communication in its general education program. In addition, an emphasis on communication forms an integral part of other courses. For example, the syllabus for the course on "The Fine Arts" indicates that students will write essays on an assortment of topics including how their tastes about music, visual art, movies, or television have changed, why a photograph may be considered non-art while a painting is considered art, and different aspects of art criticism. At Monroe Community College, the communications requirement includes a course in basic college writing, a course in advanced competition, and six units of foreign language at the intermediate level.

Critical Thinking Skills. Community College general education curricula have also embraced advanced critical thinking skills. Nearly all of the sample colleges address these skills in general education goal statements that speak of critical thinking, reasoning, effective thinking, or problem-solving. Both Miami-Dade Community College and Los Medanos College list critical thinking abilities as goals of their general education program, and course syllabi at both colleges identify opportunities and requirements for students to enhance critical reasoning skills. Critical thinking is also a basic competency in the Skills for Living program in the Dallas County Community College District. And at Valencia Community College, critical reasoning abilities are included among the competencies that serve as the foundation of the Interdisciplinary Studies in General Education program.

A few colleges offer specific courses aimed directly at enhancing students' critical thinking skills. For example, Platte Technical College offers a course entitled "Creative Problem Solving." While not required of all students, it is included among the courses from which students must choose for partial fulfillment of their distribution requirements in general education. A major objec-

tive of the course is to develop students' ability to apply basic steps in creative problem-solving to personal challenges they face, through individual, small group, and large group efforts.

At Catonsville Community College, faculty have identified certain weaknesses in students' abilities to reason and solve problems and have designed two required core courses to address this need. One course, "Explorations of Nature and Society," explores evidence-gathering techniques of the past, as well as the processes by which major theorists in the social and natural sciences have drawn conclusions.

Vocational/Liberal Fusion. Another trend in general education emerging in community colleges is the fusion of "liberal learning" with technical and vocational courses. This tendency is mentioned here because of the implications of such a wedding: in particular, the universal application of general education beyond traditional curricular boundaries.

Courses at Johnson County Community College (Kansas) consider the relationship of the humanities, humanistic ways-of-knowing, and the social sciences to technical and vocational fields (Cleek, 1979). At Johnson County modules have been developed that focus on humanities, and particularly ethical issues, and these modules have been integrated into existing vocational courses. College sources suggest that faculty from the social sciences and humanities have worked together to create such modules for use in courses in law enforcement, business, journalism, and nursing. The modules consist of lectures or interviews on video-tape, in-class presentations made by social science and humanities faculty members and, in some instances, materials designed to assist vocational instructors in presenting subject matter and blending that material with the regular course content.

Computer Technology. Although a familiarity with computer applications is a goal of the College-Level Academic Skills Program (CLASP) at Daytona Beach Community College, none of the colleges in our sample require "computer literacy" in their general education programs. Computer technology has seemingly had little impact on the content of general education, but there is a clear pattern of using computer technologies as a support mechanism. Many colleges use computer to assess students for entry into general education courses to monitor student progress and, in some cases, to evaluate the effectiveness of the general education program.

Miami-Dade Community College uses the Advisement and Graduation Information System (AGIS), which helps to place students in appropriate courses after they complete an assessment testing program. The system also realigns students' transcripts according to requirement areas, so that students may keep abreast of their progress toward completion of their program requirements. In addition, AGIS provides students and advisors with information concerning the transferability of student course work to the nine state universities in Florida. Campus sources at Miami-Dade claim that AGIS enables professional staff members to spend more time with students, thereby providing better advising, counseling, and career information service.

At Santa Fe Community College, computer technology is used to evaluate the impact of the general education requirements on student performance. The computer system analyzes data from Santa Fe's student history files and subsequent data from Florida's State University System with a program design that "enables the College to determine relationships that exist between a student's academic performance at Santa Fe and later performance in one of the State's universities" (Sullins, 1979).

Outcome Focus. Focusing on the outcomes of education reflects a legacy of the 1970s: the movement toward competency-based education. If the increasing sophistication of measurement and the development of both behavioral and conceptual analysis have made such a focus possible, grade inflation, consumerism, falling academic standards, and concerns about accountability have also made it more acceptable (Conrad and Wyer, 1980, p. 28).

The focus on outcomes surfaces clearly in the development of specific, published goal statements for general education programs. Over three-fourths of the curricula reviewed here included outcomes statements concerning what abilities students should have upon completion of the general education program. While only one of the programs reviewed was actually designated as competency-based, fully two-thirds of the curricula made reference to specific "competencies." For example, Valencia Community College publishes a list of 18 competencies for students to achieve in their program of Interdisciplinary Studies in General Education. Moreover, attempts to assess various competencies are being made in a few colleges. Given the emphasis on accountability in higher education, it seems likely that community colleges will increasingly identify and assess general education outcomes.

REVITALIZATION OF GENERAL EDUCATION?

This review establishes that major reforms in general education are being undertaken in some community colleges. But what significance, if any, do these reforms have in regard to the revitalization of the common learning? There are four major accomplishments of these reforms that could give new life to general education in two-year colleges.

First, the reaffirmation of the importance of values in general education stands as a mark of purpose-filled direction. Most colleges seem vitally concerned with relating values to all areas of knowledge in the general education curriculum, not just in humanities courses. Considerations of global perspective, values awareness, vocational/liberal fusion, and preparation for change all represent signs of a concern with continuity of values and ethical consistency. More significantly, taking the perspective of values can help to establish an integrative approach to the sciences and humanities. The continuity of the arts is as much to be valued as the consistency of the sciences, and the interaction of the two provides for constant regeneration.

Second, colleges are attempting to overcome curricular fragmentation by taking steps to integrate knowledge. All of the models identified here evidence a desire to achieve integral curricular designs, whether through interdisciplinary and integrative study, limited distribution schemes, or core courses required of all students. In addition to this patterned movement toward integration, several other features of the reforms contribute to knowledge integration, such as global perspective, values awareness, preparation for living in a changing society, and vocational/liberal fusion.

Third, colleges are emphasizing not only basic skills in writing, reading, and computation, but also higher-level skills such as critical thinking and communication. Although some may disagree, today's focus on skills could suggest a return to those skills that once were the heart of the ancient liberal arts curriculum. Communication skills bear a striking resemblance to the ancient grammar rhetoric; critical thinking skills are similar to logic; computation is related to arithmetic; and the fine arts and humanities can be linked to various harmonies, not the least of which is music.

Fourth, "developing the whole person," thus preparing people for lifelong learning and growth, is the overriding theme of many of the reforms. Encouraging basic and advanced skills while simultaneously encouraging expanded perceptual horizons represents the form and substance of a complete effort. Like early Greek educa-

tion, which was linked with the ability to live one's life well, a common theme in all the general education innovations reviewed here is that of helping students to develop abilities and skills for living productively with themselves, and in active relationship to the societies in which they belong. As James Banner (1982) recently pointed out, "... the ends of thought and scholarship have always been to enhance our understanding of our passage through life ... [and] anyone who loses sight of this venerable responsibility to place learning at the disposal of the community is not true to the ancient tradition." Many community colleges are introducing reforms which suggest a deep commitment to the development of more human and humane individuals who have an increased capacity for lifelong growth and development.

The accomplishments of this select group of community colleges suggest that a revitalization of general education may be taking place. Taken collectively, contemporary reforms like these strike directly at the overall erosion of general education in community colleges by reaffirming the basic value and meaning of general education. Colleges are structuring their curricula to combine values, knowledge integration, and basic and advanced skills in a holistic approach to general education. By blending, wittingly or unwittingly, the liberal education and contemporary traditions, a synthesis of times, places, events, information, and people evolves in the purposeful context of humanity perpetuated. The adaptivity that signals durability prevails. A small group of two-year colleges is showing evidence of such adaptive possibilities for the common learning.

4. GENERAL EDUCATION AT THE CROSSROADS

General education in the community college stands poised at a crossrods. On one more heavily traveled avenue, general education slides along in decline and disarray. Requirements have eroded along the way and relatively few efforts show evidence of either a maintenance or a recharging of the common learning. To be sure, this condition reflects a failure throughout higher education to define and give expression to the tradition of liberal education in a twentieth-century context. Whereas a surge of interest in addressing the meaning and purpose of general education persists among many four-year institutions (Gaff, 1983), the clear majority of community colleges remains unfortunately silent. This deathly quiet may signal the virtually unattended expiration of the general education program in many community colleges.

On another by-way visible to many travelers but seldom taken, tough-minded pioneers venture onto the frontier of new designs for the common learning, forging toward the uncertainties of the future. At some community colleges, self-examination has led to major innovations and reforms, including new models of and approaches to general education. Attempts to refurbish general education clearly distinguish this route, simultaneously illuminating the way.

Colleges have a choice: They may select the path trudged by the majority of colleges in recent years, a way marked by reduced amounts of required work, loosened requirements, and more reliance on discipline-based than on integrative or interdisciplinary courses. This way presents a paradox of sorts since the major common effort of those on this track, in effect, abandons the common effect—the common learning—for all practical purposes. By way of contrast, however, two-year colleges may choose another course, signaled by a reaffirmation of the value and meaning of general education through program designs based on an integrated, shared learning.

While each college must ultimately decide which road to take, it is nevertheless a propitious time for community colleges to reexamine and revitalize their programs, to consider the road "less traveled" in the belief that it can make "all the difference" (Frost, 1958, p. 254). The first part of this chapter provides a justification for that choice by offering a rationale for general education in the two-year college. The second part outlines the challenge faced in the

process of reexamination and revitalization. The final part sketches an agenda for stimulating discussion of the future of general education in community colleges.

A RATIONALE FOR GENERAL EDUCATION

Support for general education can be traced from the early writers on the junior college, such as Leonard Koos (1924) and Walter Eells (1931), to more contemporary writers such as Arthur Cohen (1982) and B. Lamar Johnson (1952; 1982). In the post-World War II period alone, as most junior colleges evolved into community colleges, many individuals and groups both outside and within two-year colleges have strongly supported general education. In 1947, for example, the President's Commission on Higher Education emphasized the significance of general education not only in transfer programs but also in programs of terminal education. The Commission stressed the importance of semiprofessional training, but further suggested that such training "properly conceived ... must not be crowded with vocational and technical courses to the exclusion of general education. It must aim at developing a combination of social understanding and technical competence" (cited in Levine, 1978, p. 622). A decade later another presidential committee echoed that recommendation, and other task forces in the following quarter of a century have urged that all community college graduates should have familiarity with broad areas of knowledge and have "competency in analytical, communication, quantitative, and synthesizing skills" (American Council of Education, 1978, p. 9).

Although numerous rationales have been provided for general education in the community college, these justifications are often severely limited. Many have been written in language so overblown and abstruse as to emasculate the holism of general education; others have been so shallow that larger meaning and value are scarificed; many have been self-serving and unpersuasive. Forging rationales for general education that overcome these limitations remains an essential task.

Such rationales in the community college must ultimately depend on the potential of general studies for developing and nuturing specific qualities in students—qualities valued by both individuals and society. At least six such qualities can be identified relating to knowledge, skills, attitudes, esthetic sensibility, interpersonal relationships, and physical well-being.

The most obvious attribute of a general education is a purposeful design for helping students to acquire information and knowledge by acquainting them with a body of facts, generalizations, theories, and ideas. The design draws upon historical and comparative perspectives to expose major thought and interpretation in the sciences, humanities, and social sciences. Knowledge provides the raw material for discourse, inquiry, choice, reflection — indeed, for every form of intellectual activity. For some students, knowledge gained in the two-year college provides a necessary foundation for further study. For all students, a general education helps to create a web of knowledge that can illuminate experience and enlighten judgment throughout life.

General education also cultivates a variety of basic intellectual skills and habits. Some community college students have very little idea of what they will do with their lives after graduation; many will eventually pursue a career very different from what they are now doing or what they expect to do. It is therefore essential that education encourage ongoing investigation and discovery. Certain fundamental intellectual skills and habits-of-thought can serve students well in almost any problem or career and offer something of lasting value in a changing, unpredictable world. Three basic abilities which subsume a multitude of skills and habits. The first, the ability to communicate orally and in writing with clarity and style, represents a fundamental process of human interaction. The second skill, the capacity for careful analysis, involves an ability to identify issues in a complex problem, collect relevant information, marshal pertinent arguments on many sides of a question, test various contentions and eliminate those resting on faulty reasoning, and arrive at conclusions which follow logically from the available data and arguments. The final skill is learning how to learn. Although no precise formula exists for "learning how to learn." a general education can help students appreciate how to read systematically about a topic and comprehend more of what they read and experience, how to arrange the knowledge they acquire in a coherent pattern, and how to evaluate critically what they have learned.

The encouragement of certain attitudes-of-mind is a third value of a general education, essential to the wise and humane use of intellectual skills. Although this is a complicated area fraught with the dangers of indoctrination, there seem to be at least four universally accepted attitudes. The first is capacity for open-mindedness, where a respect for other points of view joins a tolerance for ambiguity which arises from the realization that many problems produce a variety of respectable opinions rather than a set of right

and wrong answers. Since tolerance carried to extremes can result in vacuity, the capacity for humane commitment is a second essential attitude-of-mind. This entails a willingness to pursue them even to uncomfortable conclusions, while the fourth reflects an appetite for learning as both an end in itself and a means to an end.

The fourth quality of a general education is the development of a discriminating appreciation for literary and aesthetic creations, or what has been called "esthetic sensibility." A general education fosters the capacity to appreciate literature and to read a literary text with discrimination and understanding. Students likewise come to understand music and art by developing acuity of eye and ear and by appreciating the formal structure of art through an understanding of the historical and cultural context from which it emerges. In addition, general education can provide a wealth of opportunity and encouragement for students who wish to develop rudimentary competence as writers, painters, musicians, sculptors, or photographers.

In keeping with the philosophy of the development of the whole person, the fifth quality of a general education involves both the realm of interpersonal skills and relationships, and emotional and ethical development. These aspects of general education are not divorced from intellectual or rational skills; rather, a general education represents an integration of reason and emotion, intellectual and ethical development. The generally educated person is aware that she is, fundamentally, a moral being, constantly in interaction with other people and with values and behavior other than her own. Indeed, many of the most important events and decisions in a person's life depend upon a delicate balancing of human emotions, values, and ethical principles with logic and rational investigation. A general education concerns itself, therefore, with the development of broadly humane values, interpersonal skills, and the ability to integrate reason and emotion in judgment and decision-making.

The final value of a general education is maintaining and developing the physical self. The ancient Greeks realized the impossibility of educating the mind without educating the body. To a large extent, twentieth-century America has come to the same realization. Indeed, a sound mind and a sound body both compose (in the fullest sense of the word) the person. General education often nutures this physical self-development.

To deny community college students the opportunity to develop these qualities, qualities that have always marked the generally educated person, is an anathema to those who deeply value equality of educational opportunity. Perhaps unwittingly, many proponents of career, compensatory, and community education have

ignored the reference to "education" that is stated explicity in the concept of "equality of educational opportunity." Their zeal to accommodate every learner and every student need has resulted, in many community colleges, in the diminution of the educative function. Educational opportunity implies more than the opportunity to choose a career path or to take advantage of a potpourri of course offerings. In a more profound sense, it implies that students can be empowered with the knowledge, experiences, skills, values, and attitudes that will allow them to achieve their potential. General education presently stands as the only component of the two-year college curriculum that is solely concerned with providing that kind of education and power.

In conclusion, there is a compelling case for providing a general education to all students enrolled in the two-year college. Yet despite the persuasiveness of the argument, the fact remains that many have readily accepted, even encouraged, the erosion of general education. If widespread reexamination and revitalization are to take place, clarification and assessment of the challenge facing those who seek to reinvigorate the common learning are imperative.

THE CHALLENGE

The future of general education will not be determined by debates among scholars and speakers, but through the struggle on individual campuses between the forces for and against change in general education (Hammons, 1979, pp. 67-71). Examination of these forces can help concerned individuals come to a realistic assessment of the possibilities of reexamination and reform. We turn first to the major forces restraining change and innovation in general education.

Forces Militating Against Reform

Faculty Opposition. Although the impetus for change often emanates from individual faculty members, the faculty as a whole functions as one of the major obstacles to curricular change (Conrad, 1978a; Hammons, Thomas, and Ward, 1980). To begin with, most professors are concerned more with their own discipline than with the general education curriculum. They are likely to resist any changes which might weaken their discipline or threaten the hegemony of their department. There are other reasons why most faculty have a strong interest in the status quo. Since they have been trained in a

discipline, they may feel ill-prepared to teach new general education courses that would require them to move beyond its confines; they perceive that curriculum changes would force them to invest considerable resources in preparing to teach new courses; and, finally, they fear that changes in general education might have adverse effects on enrollment in their own and other departmental courses which might lead in turn to staff reductions.

Absence of Administrative Support. Studies of academic change have clearly established that administrative leadership is essential if changes in general education are to occur (Hefferlin, 1969). Yet despite all the administrative rhetoric regarding the need for reform in general education, administrative support has not been forthcoming in most community colleges. Administrators can stimulate change by establishing and supporting a committee charged with reexamining existing general education practices. They can further facilitate change by providing channels of communication among individual faculty and groups of faculty; by keeping things moving in an orderly fashion without appearing to force an issue; by giving tangible support to individuals and groups favoring change; and, if necessary, by serving a brokerage function, helping to negotiate needed compromises between various interest groups (Conrad, 1980). In the absense of administrative support, change in general education is highly unlikely.

Traditional Organizational Structures. Almost all two-year colleges are organized according to departments or divisions. This organization often militates against change in general education by effectively restricting teaching to departmental or divisional budget areas (Hammons, 1979, p. 69). Unless traditional structures can be modified through the use of flexible budgeting and incentives for faculty to make extra-departmental commitments to general education, innovations such as interdisciplinary general education courses are unlikely to have much support.

Few Models of General Education. David Riesman once characterized academic change as "serpentine," a metaphor suggesting in part that institutions are most likely to introduce reforms when highly visible "models" surface that can be imported or adapted to the home campus. For example, the recent adoption of a new core curriculum at Harvard College provided an impetus for reexamination

and change in many four-year institutions. In the two-year colleges, however, few innovative models of general education have emerged with enough force to spark interest in general education reform (with the possible exception of Miami-Dade Community College).

Occupational Education Emphasis. As career education has grown and prospered in the two-year college, faculty and students connected with occupational programs have not always looked with favor upon the demands of general education. Since most occupational programs require a highly structured curriculum with little room for courses outside a student's area of specialization, occupational faculty and students are often opposed to efforts aimed at strengthening general education.

Open Access, Open Exit. That two-year college function as "open access" institutions also implies that they are "open exit" as well: students may enter and leave as they please. In an environment where many students leave college only to return later (frequently taking only one course per term), it is difficult to introduce changes and still ensure sequence, integration, and continuity in general education. The irregular course-taking patterns of students can be a significant constraint on efforts to revive the common learning.

Forces Against Reform

Visibility of General Education. In the last several years, general education has become a visible issue in higher education. Conferences, regional and national workshops, foundation and association programs, journal and popular articles have been devoted to reexamination and change in general education. When coupled with the attempts of large numbers of four-year colleges and universities to reformulate their programs, these developments reflect a "movement" toward the reform of general education on the nation's campuses (Gaff, 1983, p. 2). Although this "movement" seems to be occurring largely in four-year institutions, a number of community colleges have initiated reforms, and most two-year college faculty and administrators retain an acute awareness of the recent publicity concerning general education. Such visibility can provide a powerful impetus for change in community and junior colleges.

Concern About Quality. Although program quality has been an enduring concern among educators, social pressures have combined to make program quality a major issue in higher education today. Such factors as public disenchantment with higher education, declining resources, increased competition for students, and changing student characteristics have influenced the evolution of this issue. Especially in two-year colleges, where "equality of education opportunity" has sometimes been emphasized at the expense of quality, renewed concerns about promoting quality are surfacing. Since many of the criticisms about the effects of the current level of program quality, such as a decline in basic and advanced thinking skills, speak primarily to the state of general studies courses, attempts to improve quality in the two-year college must begin with the reexamination and general reform of general education.

Reduction of Articulation Problems. In the past, transfer requirements at four-year institutions frequently militated against major innovations in general education in the two-year college. The requirements represented such a rigidly defined barrier that community colleges found themselves forced to offer only courses that were acceptable for transfer, or to risk letting down students who intended to transfer to a four-year institution. As a result, most community colleges developed transfer and general education programs that were designed to fit the requirements of senior institutions rather than to their own identified mission (Academic Crossover Report, 1978; 1979). Today, many four-year institutions are eager to attract community college students and articulation problems have diminished considerably. Moreover, general education transfer agreements have been reached in many states which give community colleges enhanced flexibility in designing their general education programs. As a result of the reduction or elimination of articulation problems, today's environment is more conducive to change and innovation.

Student Receptivity. Despite widespread belief that students are not interested in general education, there is some evidence that many students are quite receptive to the concept. A recent study of college freshmen found that entering students ranked general education as one of their three major reasons for seeking higher education (Astin, 1981). Moreover, a 1978 study by the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education (Boyer and Levine, 1981) found that 97 percent of a representative sample of college students considered

general education an "essential" or "fairly important" part of their college education. At the same time, college students experienced more dissatisfaction with their general education courses than with either their majors or elective courses outside of general education (Boyer and Levine, 1981, p. 48). Since a large number of students are interested in general education but are disenchanted with existing programs, the time seems especially ripe for reexamination and reform.

In conclusion, although general education seems to be dying a slow, quiet death, threatening to reduce the common learning to an education ornament, there remain powerful forces for change that could provide the basis for a period of vigorous self-examination and revitalization of general education.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

What directions, then, offer the greatest prospects for revitalizing general education in the community college? The following recommendations provide a broad framework designed to stimulate and facilitate both dialogue and action on the future of general education.

Recommendation 1: Each Community College Should Conduct a Major Self-Study of Its General Education Program.

As a first step in reviving common learning, every community college that has not completed a review within the last few years should seriously consider a major self-study of its general education program. Self-study should begin with a searching examination of the goals of general education and an evaluation of the current program: its strengths, limitations, and overall effectivenss. When consensus is reached on goals and when program evaluation has been complete, attention should turn to program planning: developing and exploring alternative program designs and practices; considering the adoption of changes that are compatible with institutional purposes and needs; and, if changes are deemed appropriate, developing strategies for effectively bringing them about. In short, self-study should be aimed at both comprehensive program review and program planning.

The remaining recommendations represent a breakdown and elaboration of these guidelines for the review and reform of general education in two-year colleges.

Recommendation 2: Each Community College Should Reach a Consensus on the Goals of General Education.

The necessity for incorporating goals and purposes into any design for a general education program is so great as to require no justification. Yet like their four-year counterparts, two-year colleges cannot seem to break the mold of goals that are vague, lifeless, and at best inoffensive. Especially for purposes of program review and planning, community colleges need to reach a consensus on specific working goals and assign priority to them. Goals can serve as benchmarks against which the current program can be evaluated and, no less important, an awareness of them should pervade all program planning, including the introduction of changes and innovations. Moreover, the process of goal-setting itself can function as a powerful catalyst for reexamination and reform, prodding the college community into a searching appraisal of the purpose and meaning of general education.

In reexamining its goals for general education, the campus community must wrestle with one fundamental question: What should be the purpose and meaning of our program of general education? Two more fundamental questions can help guide the goal-setting process: What knowledge and skills are most important for our students? How important is it that our program develop the "whole student"? In searching for consensus, it may prove helpful for members of the self-study group and the larger campus community to reflect on the history of liberal and general education and, if appropriate, to renew the connection between the two, but without being prisoner to the tradition of liberal education.

Recommendation 3: Each Community College Should Conduct a Formal Evaluation of Its General Education Program and, if Appropriate, Introduce Curricular Changes.

Once consensus has been reached on the goals of general education, each community college should complete a major assessment of its general education program. What is the evidence concerning the effectiveness of the program? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program? Formal evaluation is important for several reasons. First, and most important, evaluation helps to identify problems in the existing program and provides useful information in support of critical decisions regarding its future. Second, formal evaluation helps shift the grounds of discussion from the normative to the invariably couched in value-laden frameworks, but

in formal evaluations, the differing views of general education can be tested through scientific procedures. A well-designed evaluation can assess competing claims concerning the effectiveness of the current program. Third, evaluation can generate political support for any proposed changes in general education by exposing weaknesses in the current program.

Following the completion of a program review, some colleges may decide that their current program works effectively and needs no major modification. In the majority of colleges, however, there will probably be compelling evidence that at least some changes are needed. If the self-study group proposes to make changes, the first step should involve the exploration of alternative designs and practices. At this stage, institutions should consider various models, innovations, and changes that might be adapted to the home campus. The literature on nontraditional curriculum practices may be particularly helpful (Bergquist, Gould, and Greenberg, 1981; Conrad and Pratt, 1983), as would visits to other colleges using innovative approaches to general education. Once various alternatives have been fully explored and discussed, the self-study group must then initiate changes in the program (subject, of course, to the consent of the ultimate decision-making body). At this point, a firm foundation has been laid for the revitalization of general education.

Recommendation 4: Each Community College Should Review and Plan Its General Education Program in the Context of Its Own Mission, Students, and Ethos.

In the past, most colleges have been only too willing to adopt outside ideas for improving their general education program, rather than adapting curricular ideas and practices to institutional needs. As a result, many curricular modifications have been doomed to failure because they are incompatible with an institution's mission, students, and educational environment. As colleges review their general education programs, it is important that they be judicious in examining innovative practices at other colleges and in relying on expert opinion. They should be careful to observe differences among institutions and among institutional types. Each college has a distinctive history and mission, a different setting, and serves a different student clientele. Emphasizing institutional distinctiveness need not imply that programs of general education will differ substantially across institutions, but it does suggest that curricular designs, programs, and practices must be compatible with local needs and resources.

If borrowing innovative ideas and practices from other institutions bodes danger, so too does an overreliance on outside experts. Whether in their writings or through individual consultation, experts often offer grand schemes for the revitalization of general education which, despite their best intentions, do not take local circumstances into account. All of this is not to say that reviewing developments in other colleges and seeking expert opinion is not useful, for it can help to illuminate issues and suggest possibilities for innovation and reform. In the final analysis, however, program review and planning must not be shaped primarily by a concern for importing curricular designs and practices, but by a preeminent desire to introduce curricular changes only as they mesh compatibly with institutional needs.

Recommendation 5: Each Community College Should Develop Strategies for Change and Implementation.

Self-study groups concerned with reexamination and reform often focus on substantive issues: the purpose and meaning of general education, the strengths and limitations of alternative curriculum designs, the content of general education, and overlook the process of curriculum change. Unfortunately, some of the soundest, most innovative proposals for change in general education have failed because not enough attention was paid to developing strategies for bringing about such change. As Gaff (1983, p. 50) put it:
put it:

> The biggest pothole to avoid [in general education reform] is the notion that strategies are unimportant and that they enter the picture only after a proposed program is approved and about to be implemented. Rather, strategies are critical; they are as important as the substantive issues and need to be considered from the outset.

Strategies for reform can help to overcome resistance to the reform and, of equal significance, they can help to ensure that changes find effective implementation once approved.

While common-sense approaches to developing change strategies have merit, and certainly remain preferable to no change strategy at all, self-study groups would be well-advised to consult the

literature on academic change for other strategies that might be usefully employed. In the last several years, a substantial amount of research has scrutinized the process of academic change, resulting in a compendium of strategies. The following strategies for bringing about change in general education represent a synthesis of some of this research (Conrad, 1980, pp. 104-110):

Create a Climate for Change

Create the need for change
Communicate and publicize the proposal

Build Faculty Support

Utilize opinion leaders to persuade others
Involve a wide range of faculty
Establish the compatibility of the change
Emphasize the benefits of the innovation for faculty
Build coalitions: know when to fight
Know when to compromise

Exert Administrative Leadership

Combine initiative with involvement
Serve as a compromiser

Organize for Implementation

Incorporate an explicit implementation plan into the proposal
Build an effective structure of rewards and resources
Choose an appropriate mechanism for administering the program
Select key people for administering the program
Incorporate a plan for faculty development
Make adjustments throughout the implementation process

Various other strategies for change have been suggested in the literature (Gaff, 1983; Levine, 1980; Newcombe and Conrad, 1981; Wattenbarger and Scaggs, 1979; Wee, 1981). By choosing and then adapting these strategies within the context of their own institution, self-study groups can enhance their possibilities for orchestrating the dynamics of change.

EPILOGUE

All living systems must change and adapt to their environments in order to survive and grow. Just as vocational and technical programs must change in response to advances in technology, so too must general education programs find continuous reexamination and appropriate modification in regard to student, community, and environmental needs. Unfortunately, only a few colleges have so far made such an adaptive effort. The majority of two-year colleges, moreover, show the reverse effects: their general education programs languishing in neglect, the institutions have wittingly or unwittingly chosen euthanasia instead of life. Yet another paradox emerges: These two-year colleges were originally organized on the premises of change and renewal, the very premises they reject when they choose in favor of short-range survival mechanisms. Unless community colleges revive a sustaining common learning, they can claim to effect neither a durable education nor equality of educational opportunity. Indeed, education for the short-term ultimately represents no education at all. Before an unenlightened era envelopes a generation of community college participants in its shadows, a renaissance needs to unfold. The remaining question then is whether the colleges will risk the unfolding—and an enlightened path.

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